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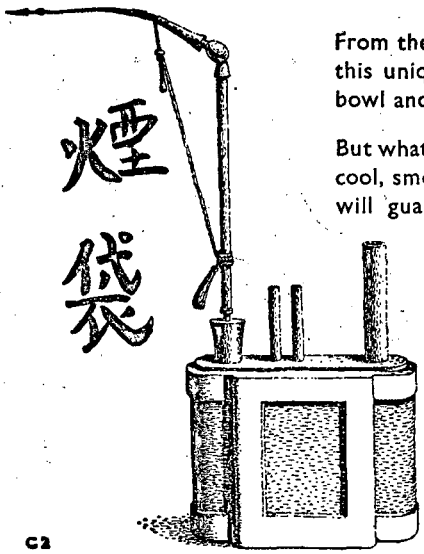

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ARGOSY

Contents for July, 1949

Vol. X **No. 7**

		Page
Sea-Island Town	**Hervey Allen**	**4**
Grey Seagull	**Liam O'Flaherty**	**5**
Gems from Garcia	**Patterson Greene**	**17**
Pastoral	**Ogden Nash**	**22**
The Symbol of Power	**Neil Bell**	**23**
A Truce with Time		**28**
Never Come Monday	**Eric Knight**	**31**
The Red Room	**H. G. Wells**	**43**
Adoption By Grace	**Phyllis Bottome**	**51**
July	**Justin Richardson**	**64**
By permission of "The Tatler"		
The Year of the Spider	**Neil Paterson**	**65**
The House that Jack Built		**86**
It Was Mutual	**Colin Bullard**	**87**
The English Game		**92**
"Well Caught!" and "Fourth Dimension," by permission of William Collins; "Last Over," by permission of Longmans Green		
Frost In April	**Malachi Whitaker**	**95**
From "Selected Stories," by permission of Jonathan Cape		
The Bear Who Let It Alone	**James Thurber**	**102**
Copyright 1939 by James Thurber. By permission of "The New Yorker"		
King of the Night	**Chetwood Schwarzkopf**	**103**
Cradle Song		**112**
The extract from "The Extremities of Filial Piety," from "Harvest," by permission of Castle Press		
Hornblower and the Spanish Galleys	**C. S. Forester**	**115**
Argosy Crossword		**144**

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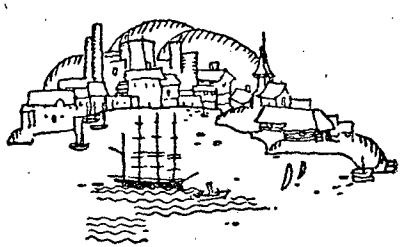
Sea-Island Town

SEA-ISLAND winds sweep through Palmetto Town,
Bringing with piney tang the old romance
Of Pirates and of smuggling gentlemen;
And tongues as languorous as southern France.
Mornings, the flower-women hawk their wares—
Bearing the bloom-heaped baskets on their heads;
Lithe, with their arms akimbo in wide grace,
Their jasmine nods jestingly at cares—
Dreams peer like prisoners through her harp-like gates,
Where lichened sundials shadow ancient dates,
And deep piazzas loom.

Fringing her quays are frayed palmetto posts,
Where clipper ships once moored along the ways,
And fanlight doorways, sunstruck with old ghosts,
Sicken with loves of her lost yesterdays.
Often I halt upon some gabled walk,
Thinking I see the ear-ringed picaroons,
Slashed with a sash or Spanish folderols,
Gambling for moidores or for gold doubloons.

But they have gone where night goes after day,
And the old streets are gay with whistled tunes,
Bright with the lilt of scarlet parasols,
Carried by honey-voiced young octoroons.

HERVEY ALLEN



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GREY SEAGULL

"Is it the wild horse from Borneo?" shouted a voice from the crowd

by LIAM O'FLAHERTY

THE whole Deacy family was gathered round the dining-room table at Kilfinnan House after supper, holding counsel in a state of deep depression. It was only three days to the annual point-to-point races of the Coolagh Hunt. Yet they had no rider for their five-year-old gelding, Grey Seagull, with which they hoped to win the Liosbawn Plate. The oldest son, Roger, a lad of twenty, was to have taken the mount. He now sat at the far end of the table with his right arm in splints and white bandages. He had broken it a fortnight previously while training Grey Seagull over fences.

They had tried everywhere to get a substitute for Roger, but without any success. The trouble was that the grey gelding would let nobody else stay on his back longer than two or three seconds. So that the situation looked absolutely hopeless.

"We must keep on trying," Roger said, breaking a long silence. "I tell you that Grey Seagull is not really savage. He's just nervous and he likes very few people. If we could only find somebody he really liked to ride him, he would . . ."

"It's no use fooling yourself any longer, Roger," Mr. Deacy interrupted in a gloomy tone. "We can't find a rider for him. That's all there is to it. It's our luck. It's the Deacy luck. There's no going against it. It's been following me all my life."

"That's utter nonsense, John," Mrs. Deacy said.

"It's the truth, Dorothy," said Mr. Deacy. "You should know it is by now, after being married to me for twenty-two years."

"There is no such thing as the Deacy bad luck," Mrs. Deacy said. "I'm sick and tired of hearing it given as an excuse for incompetence, laziness and plain lunacy."

Mr. Deacy certainly looked just a little bit mad as he glared at his wife. He was a tall, raw-boned fellow of sixty-one, with a wild look in his dark eyes. There was a big scar over his right temple, due to a bad fall he got as a young man while riding in a steeplechase.

"Upon my word!" he cried. "That's a fine thing to say in

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front of the children at a moment like this, when I'm in the depths of misery and a kindly word of advice might help me to find a way out of my trouble. You're a fine partner for a man and no mistake. A fine partner, indeed."

"Never mind, Father," Roger said. "Pay no attention to Mother. She just likes to hear herself talk."

"I don't want to hear any more of your impertinence, Roger," Mrs. Deacy snapped. "Since you've begun to follow in your father's footsteps, gambling and race-riding, you've lost all trace of good manners and of respect for your elders. You've become a real Deacy."

"Come now, all of you," Aunt Penelope said. "Behave yourselves. You won't get a jockey by abusing one another. If there were anything to be gained by abuse, this family would be the richest in the whole county."

Mr. Deacy struck the table with his clenched fists and swore.

"Talk about luck," he groaned. "Here I've been all my life trying to breed a good steeplechaser. I've found one at last, when I'm on my last legs. He's really a good horse. There is no doubt about it. I'd give my solemn oath that he's not only good but great, even though he hasn't yet been put to the acid test of a race against first-class performers over major obstacles. If I could only bring him along in the right way I could get ten thousand pounds for him within a year."

"Ten thousand fiddlesticks!" cried Mrs. Deacy contemptuously.

"There isn't a word of a lie in it," cried Mr. Deacy excitedly. "There are crowds of hungry Englishmen coming over to Ireland now in order to eat good Irish meat. Their pockets are bursting with money. When they have a few good steaks under their belts they get so happy that they all want to buy a steeplechaser and win the Grand National. They are paying fantastic prices for old nags that aren't worth their oats."

"Ten thousand fiddlesticks!" repeated Mrs. Deacy. "If you only tilled your land, John, or even raised cattle . . ."

"He's right, Mother," Roger interrupted. "What he says is true. I know that Lord Dilisk got four thousand pounds the other day for a horse called Simpleton, that he bought from Barney Gouldrick for three hundred and fifty pounds only two months ago. Remember, father? Everybody in the place said he was mad for giving Barney the three hundred and fifty."

"That's a fact," said Mr. Deacy. "He got four thousand for Simpleton, a ten-year-old horse that never finished better than third. Smart boy, that Dilisk. Oh! I could be just as smart if I only could get a rider for Grey Seagull. If I could win the Liosbawn Plate with him and then a couple of other point-to-point

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races, I'd have enough money to enter him for big events. Then I could go to Punchestown with him next year, and if he won for me there, he'd be recognized as a young champion. I could get a barrel of money for him."

"Every Deacy is born a lunatic," Mrs. Deacy said, "and he dies a lunatic, without a single interval of sanity during his whole life. If you only did some honest work, instead of dreaming these impossible schemes for getting rich quickly, we wouldn't be overdrawn at the bank and we wouldn't be ashamed to show our faces in the town on account of all the money we owe."

"There's a great deal in what you say, Dorothy," Penelope said, "but I'd like to point out that your own family, the Fitzannans, are not exactly models of industry and thrift, either. Are they, now?"

"That's enough, Penelope," Mr. Deacy said. "Don't get personal."

"For God's sake," said Brian, a red-headed lad of seventeen, "can't you old people try to think of someone else to ride Grey Seagull instead of quarrelling like tinkers?"

"I'm the most unlucky man on earth," said Mr. Deacy. "When I had abandoned hope of ever breeding a good horse, I'm given a champion by the merciful dispensation of Divine Providence. Then the champion turns out to be savage and unmanageable."

"Grey Seagull is not savage, father," cried Roger indignantly. "Why do you keep on saying that he is savage?"

"If he's not savage," said Mr. Deacy, "then I'll eat my head. That animal is the most savage creature I ever saw in my life."

"He's really very gentle with anybody he likes," said Roger, "and he has a mouth like an angel. How can he be savage when he has such a beautiful mouth?"

"When that animal sees me coming," said Mr. Deacy, "he bares his teeth and lets a roar out of him that would put the heart crosswise in a Zulu warrior."

"That's just his nerves," Roger said. "He's very sensitive. There are only a few people that he trusts."

"A few, did you say?" cried Mr. Deacy. "You're the only one he lets near him, and that proves he's mad. Every mad horse has a streak in him like that, letting only one person come near him. Oh! what's the use of talking? It's the bad luck of the Deacy family that keeps pursuing me."

"He lets Aunt Penelope come near him, too," Roger continued, "and that proves he's not mad. He likes her even more than he likes me. Isn't that true, Aunt Penelope?"

"So he does," said Mrs. Deacy in a spiteful tone, "but that merely goes to prove that he's very mad indeed."

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"You never miss a chance, Dorothy," Penelope said. "Do you?"

Then the youngest child, a girl of sixteen called Charlotte, made a startling suggestion.

"If he's so fond of Aunt Penelope," she said in a deep voice, "why doesn't she ride him in the race?"

Mr. Deacy and the three children all looked intently at Aunt Penelope. Mrs. Deacy snorted contemptuously and continued to knit her jumper.

"That's right," said Aunt Penelope indignantly as she pushed back her chair. "Make fun of an old woman. What next?"

She was sixty-three, and strongly resembled her brother, being tall and raw-boned, with wild dark eyes that gave her red-cheeked face a slightly lunatic expression. She had a fine head of steel-grey hair. In her youth she had been a noted rider to hounds. She had also ridden with some success in point-to-point races. For the past twenty years, however, she had not ridden at all owing to defective sight. Otherwise, she was still very strong and active. She had the reputation of being the best walker in the whole district.

The three children crowded round her and protested in loud voices against her accusation that they were making fun of her.

"It's a wonderful idea," Roger shouted.

"We should have thought of it long ago," said Brian. "You are the best rider in the whole county. I heard Jack Hynes the veterinary surgeon say so, and he should know, being a great rider himself."

"I've been thinking of it for two days, Aunt Penelope," Charlotte said in her solemn voice, "but I couldn't get a chance to speak."

Mr. Deacy struck the table and said gloomily:

"Sit down, children, and don't talk nonsense. You know very well that a woman of Penelope's age couldn't handle a savage animal like Grey Seagull in a race of that length. Man alive! When that animal gets excited . . ."

"You're wrong, Father," Roger cried in a shrill tone. "Grey Seagull is really so gentle that . . ."

"You must remember, too, Roger," Mrs. Deacy interrupted, "that Aunt Penelope is as blind as a bat."

"I'm nothing of the sort," Penelope cried indignantly. "I can see far better than you can, Dorothy. I can see quite well with my glasses. Just to prove it, I'll get up on Grey Seagull tomorrow and jump a couple of those fences out there."

The three children raised a cheer.

"Good old Aunt Penelope!" cried Roger. "I knew you had it in you."

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"Easy now, children," Mr. Deacy said, as he got to his feet. "We mustn't talk nonsense. I couldn't let Penelope ride him. I'd never be able to forgive myself if anything happened to her."

"Don't be a fool, John," said Penelope haughtily. "I can ride as well as ever. I just want to show Dorothy I'm not blind."

Mr. Deacy stroked his chin, and a wild light came into his eyes as he looked at his sister. His heart began to beat much more quickly.

"All right, Penelope," he said, after swallowing his breath with difficulty. "If you really want to try him tomorrow . . ."

Next morning Penelope looked like a child when she climbed on to the back of the huge animal in her spectacles and grey sweater and riding-breeches. He was over seventeen hands and powerfully built.

"Take care, now, Penelope," Mr. Deacy shouted at her from a distance.

He did not dare come any nearer, for fear of exciting the horse.

"Rubbish," Penelope said. "Let go the reins, Roger. Why are you all so nervous? One would think I'm a four-year-old girl, getting her very first lesson."

She spoke to the horse and walked him slowly down the paddock, towards the big field where Mr. Deacy had built some regulation fences to school young horses. Grey Seagull did not at all behave like a wild animal. He obeyed her in most docile fashion. After trotting around the field for a little while she shook him into a gallop and put him at one of the fences. He sailed over it beautifully. Penelope showed that she had lost none of her old skill during her long absence from the saddle. She gathered him after landing like a professional.

The children raised a great cheer as they watched the horse and the little old woman go over the jump safely. Mr. Deacy smiled broadly.

"What did I tell you, Father?" Roger shouted. "Grey Seagull is as gentle as a lamb with anyone he likes. Watch him take this next one now. He is a born jumper. He rises to them like a stag."

Penelope and the horse jumped the second fence and a third in the same faultless style. Then they returned to the paddock.

"There you are," Penelope said, after they had helped her to dismount. "That proves that I'm not blind."

Mr. Deacy grasped his sister's hand and shook it excitedly.

"You're wonderful," he said, "but do you think you could stick it out for the four miles of the Liosbawn course? It's tough going."

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"Of course she could," cried Roger. "She could and she will."

"I can try," Penelope said grimly, "since there is nobody else available. I know you have your heart set on winning this race, John. I know how much it means to you. Personally, I'm just as anxious as you are to see Grey Seagull make a name for himself. I love the animal. I think he's a great horse and I want the whole world to know how really good he is."

The three children again cheered and hugged their aunt.

"That settles it," Mr. Deacy said. "We'll have a go at the race and Penelope will ride. Now we must see about getting the necessary for a good bet. With Lord Dilisk's mount a hot favourite, we should at least get five to one about Grey Seagull."

He spent the intervening days trying to raise money. That proved very difficult, for he had no credit in the district. Nobody would lend him a penny. He finally managed to collect forty-seven pounds by selling a new set of harness and some other things. To be exact, he got forty-five pounds in cash and a bottle of brandy.

"It's not much," he said to the family at breakfast on the morning of the race, "but it's a start in any case. If I can get four or five to one, we'll have a couple of hundred pounds to put on the next race."

At that moment Aunt Penelope threw five pounds on the table in front of her brother, telling him to put on a bet for herself.

"It's all I've got left," she said, "out of the legacy that my uncle Anthony bequeathed to me eighteen years ago."

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Deacy.

"Wilful waste makes woeful want," Mrs. Deacy said bitterly. "At this moment I don't know where I could get an ounce of tea or a pound of beef on credit."

It was really a terrible day, with a fierce wind and intermittent showers of hailstones. The cold was intense. Yet an enormous crowd came out to Palmer's Bog, where the races were being held, high up among the mountain peaks. Tinkers were there in hordes from six counties. The vast number of tents gave the impression that an army was encamped on the wild moor. These vagrants began to make merry at an early hour, drinking and playing their accordions and dancing. So that there was a tremendous tumult by the time racing began.

The Deacy people delayed their arrival as long as they could, in order to save Grey Seagull from being made entirely unmanageable by the noise. Even so, he behaved very badly as they led him through the crowd on the way to the saddling enclosure. In spite of Roger's efforts to pacify him, the huge animal kept rearing and kicking so savagely that people fled from his path in terror.

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"Is that the wild horse from Borneo you've got there, Mr. Deacy?" a man shouted in a mocking tone.

"Is it to the zoo you're taking him?" cried another. "Janey! It's not every zoo would admit a ruffian like that."

Mr. Deacy became almost as wild as the horse on hearing these remarks. He shook his stick at the crowd and retorted in a way that only incited them to further outbursts.

"You ignorant louts!" he shouted. "I'll soon show you what this horse can do. You bog-trotting apes!"

"Come along, John," his wife said to him as she seized him by the arm. "Don't be foolish."

He shouted back over his shoulder at his tormentors as she dragged him away by force. In the meantime, Penelope and Roger managed to get Grey Seagull into the saddling enclosure without mishap.

Then Lord Dilisk came forward and made a remark that caused Mr. Deacy to go into another rage.

"Got a rider yet for your horse, John?" Lord Dilisk said.

"I have," said Mr. Deacy arrogantly, "and a damn sight better one than your horse is going to have."

"Oh! have you?" Lord Dilisk said in an insolent tone. "May I ask who it is?"

Dilisk was a tall, hard-faced man with a black moustache and cold blue eyes that seemed to look at everybody with hatred. He had a great name as a successful rider and breeder of steeplechasers. He was equally successful in selling them to visiting English people at high prices.

"My sister is going to ride for me," Mr. Deacy said.

Dilisk glanced at Penelope, who looked ever so slender and old as she stood shivering in her shabby belted raincoat and jockey cap.

"Are you serious?" he said to Mr. Deacy, raising his eyebrows.

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Deacy angrily.

Dilisk shrugged his shoulders.

"If you let her ride that untrained animal," he said, "it's really tantamount to signing her death warrant. At her age any sort of fall would most assuredly be fatal."

"Did you say my horse is untrained?" cried Mr. Deacy.

"Entirely untrained," Dilisk said. "He's quite savage and unmanageable."

"Are you being deliberately offensive?" cried Mr. Deacy.

"Not in the least," said Dilisk. "I'm just telling you for your own good that you shouldn't run the horse at all."

"Untrained, eh!" shouted Mr. Deacy, livid with rage.

"It's common knowledge," Dilisk added, "that you couldn't get a man in the whole district to ride him. He's going to be a

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menace to the rest of us during the race. It's very unsporting of you to run him."

Then he turned abruptly and walked away.

"Untrained, eh!" shouted Mr. Deacy, as he brandished his stick. "You impudent coxscomb! You damned horse-coper! You're furious because I turned down your offer to buy my horse. That's your trouble, you miserable skinflint!"

He then turned to address the crowd that had collected round him.

"The miser came to me a month ago," he shouted, "and offered me two hundred pounds for my horse. I told him I'd rather put a bullet through Grey Seagull's head than sell him at that price. Then he offered me two hundred and fifty. I ordered him off my property. I told him I'd rather starve than . . ."

The whole family had to gather round the foolish man and make frantic appeals to him before his shouting ceased. They looked pathetic standing there in a little group, with their shabby clothes and their wild faces and their wild horse; like a pack of hungry wolves surrounded by a crowd of people that taunted them.

"Never mind," Mr. Deacy said when he had regained his composure a little. "We'll see who'll be laughing after the race."

When he went to make his bet the bookmaker freely offered to lay him odds of ten to one.

"I hate to take your money, Mr. Deacy," the bookmaker said with a laugh, "but business is business."

"You won't have it long," Mr. Deacy said as he strode away.

Mr. Deacy looked so confident that the bookmaker whispered to one of his assistants.

"Go and lay off half that fifty," he said. "You might get twenties down the line. That lunatic might really have something up his sleeve. Miracles are always happening at the races. The old woman might win it."

"If she does," said the assistant as he hurried away, "I'll take the pledge for life."

When the moment came for Penelope to get on Grey Seagull's back, she asked her brother for some brandy. Mr. Deacy opened the bottle and gave it to her.

"Don't drink too much of it," he said, "or it might go to your head. You'll need to keep cool, I'm telling you. Remember now to keep behind Dilisk's horse until you're over the second last jump. Then come away."

In spite of her brother's warning, Penelope took a really long swig at the bottle. Then she secured her spectacles with tape and they hoisted her into the saddle.

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"Goodbye, Penelope," Mrs. Deacy said to her. "I don't bear you any ill will. Remember that."

"You are a bitter pill, Dorothy," Penelope said. "Even at this moment you can't resist sticking your little knife into my back. You are a real Fitzannan, every inch of you."

"Enough of that now, Penelope," said Mr. Deacy as he clutched his sister's knee. "Remember what I told you. You don't know the course, so make sure not to get pushed into the lead before you come to the second last fence. It's a straight road from there on in to the winning post. Keep behind Dun Emer until you're over the second last. Then give him his head and come away. Of course, if Dun Emer falls before then, let some other horse lead you to the second last. Good luck to you now, and don't let Dilisk play any dirty tricks on you. That scoundrel would stop at nothing."

Oddly enough, Grey Seagull became as gentle as a lamb once Penelope got on his back. He did not even mind Mr. Deacy coming near him. He cantered down through the crowd, on the way to the post, as quietly as if he were a veteran. In spite of that, the people kept whistling and cracking jokes about Penelope.

"They've got the old woman of the sea riding the wild horse from Borneo," shouted a bookmaker. "There's a combination for you. Even money Dun Emer. Four to one Umbrella. Six to one Fighting Cock and Shaun Murphy. Ten to one Grey Seagull."

Fortified by the brandy she had drunk and the excitement of again taking part in a race after a lapse of thirty years, Penelope had no difficulty in getting Grey Seagull to line up properly at the post. She got him away with the field. Indeed, she realized at once that he was a born racehorse, one of those animals that always do their best in a competition with others. She felt thrilled at being able to govern his great power by the slightest touch of the reins.

"He's a marvel," she said to herself as they approached the first jump. "If I can only stay with him, he'll win in a canter."

The nine horses took the first fence almost in a row and maintained close order without mishap of any sort until more than a mile had been covered. Then Shaun Murphy fell at the jump leading to the ploughed field. A little farther ahead, a horse called Rowdy Tim dislodged the young woman who was riding him and bolted into the country. Umbrella then quickened his pace and soon led the field by ten lengths, with Fighting Cock and Dun Emer running level in second place. Following her brother's instructions to the letter, Penelope lay a couple of lengths behind Dun Emer.

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During the first half of the race the horses ran with the wind at their backs. So that Penelope had nothing much to do but sit Grey Seagull, who was going beautifully. She was only aware of the great thrill of being in a race once more. Then the field turned for home, straight into the teeth of the fierce gale, with almost two miles still to go. The poor woman then forgot the thrill and gritted her teeth, as she felt the icy cold penetrate her frail body. She had barely enough strength to prevent herself from being dislodged by the storm.

"Good Lord!" she muttered in despair. "I'll never be able to stay with him. I'm done."

Umbrella made a bad mistake at the stone wall, cutting both his hind legs and being brought to his knees on landing. Although righted by his rider's skill, he was so shaken that he soon dropped out of contention. Fighting Cock then took a slight lead of Dun Emer, with Grey Seagull still going easily in third place a few lengths to the rear. Going up the slope to the double, Fighting Cock began to show signs of exhaustion. Although he took both obstacles under urging without making any mistake, it became obvious shortly afterwards that he had shot his bolt. He slowed down almost to a walk and joined Umbrella far to the rear of the field.

It was at this point that Lord Dilisk decided to make his effort and part company with Penelope. He suddenly shook up his mount and drew away rapidly at full speed.

"Here we go," said Penelope to herself, as she sent Grey Seagull in pursuit. "Now we begin to race."

The big horse responded readily and soon regained his former position, three lengths behind Dun Emer. There Penelope checked him, not yet wishing to take the lead. Dilisk glanced back over his shoulder and then gave his mount a few sharp cuts of the whip. Even so, Dun Emer could not quicken his pace any further. He was already going as hard as he could.

"If I don't fall out of the saddle," Penelope said to herself, "the race is won. Only for this awful cold . . ."

Three-quarters of a mile from home a fierce shower of hailstones began to fall. The stones were almost as big as marbles. The cold was now extreme. She tried to hide her face behind her horse's head lest her spectacles might get blurred. As the horse rose to the next jump, however, a flock of the hailstones crashed against the lenses and deprived her of all sight. When Grey Seagull had landed safely she put up her left hand and tried to clear the lenses. That only made matters worse. Her fingers were completely numb. They had almost lost all power of movement. They had also become caked with wet mud during the race. Their

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awkward groping merely transferred some of the mud to the already dirty lenses. Then she got panic-stricken and tried to remove the spectacles. She failed to do so. She had secured them firmly about her ears with tape. Her remaining strength was insufficient to remove them. Indeed, the shock of finding herself blinded almost made her unconscious.

She rallied, however, dropping her hand back to the reins and gripping desperately with her knees in an effort to maintain herself in the saddle.

"I must hang on," she muttered through her clenched teeth. "I must."

Using the last ounce of strength in her frail old body, she clung blindly to the big horse's back as he plunged ahead through the hailstorm. Then she felt him rise to the jump, land safely and race away once more. She heard Dilisk's voice calling frantically to his mount. To her joy, she realized that the voice of her rival came from the rear and that it was rapidly becoming more remote.

"We've passed him," she said to herself. "Oh! If I can only hang on. If Grey Seagull can only find his way home."

After taking the next jump she heard the roar of the crowd straight ahead of her and she knew that the horse was still running truly. Then the thrill of victory took possession of her and she became hysterical.

"Go on, Grey Seagull," she cried shrilly, with her teeth chattering. "I knew you could do it. Go on, you beauty. It's your race now. You've won it. Go on."

The big horse galloped past the winning post more than forty lengths in front of Dun Emer, with Penelope chirping shrilly on his back like a hen bird whose nest has been robbed. He galloped through the cheering crowd, leaped a big car that stood parked in his way and then came quietly to a halt at the exact spot where Penelope had mounted him.

Penelope was still shouting hysterically when they removed her from the saddle. They wrapped her in blankets and rushed her into a tent and gave her the brandy bottle.

"He jumped the last mile on his own," she said to her brother when she had recovered a little. "I got blinded by the hailstones. I saw nothing for the last mile. He came home on his own. He is a marvel."

Mr. Deacy himself took a long swig at the brandy. Then he swung his stick and yelled.

"On to Punchestown!" he cried. "On to the Grand National!"

They carried Penelope on their shoulders, the crowd did, over to the tattered old car that belonged to the Deacy family. They

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wanted to lead Grey Seagull also in a triumphal procession, but the big horse would have none of their adulation. With Penelope no longer on his back, the wild animal returned to his former savage temper. He screamed and reared on his hind legs and kicked in such a frenzied fashion that the people soon fled from him. Roger had to lead him away quietly.

Then Mr. Deacy got into his old car and sat there with his arm around Penelope's shoulder and they drove away amid the frantic cheering of the people.

"Ah! Miss Penelope," the people said, "you're a great little old woman, sure enough."

Mr. Deacy kept waving his stick and shouting:

"On to Punchestown! On to the Grand National!"

* * *

TOO SHORT

A young journalist was sent down to Shaw's country home in Ayot St. Lawrence to persuade him to write a piece called "How to Grow Old Gracefully." Shaw's answer was justifiably unfit for publication, but then he took pity on the journalist, and said:

"I know you are trying to carry out a ludicrous assignment. To keep you from going away empty-handed, I'll tell you how I happened to settle in this little town. I was here on a visit, and in the course of one of my long walks alone, happily, I came upon a graveyard. One of the tombstones bore an inscription that ran something like this:

MARY ANN SOUTHWORTH
BORN 1815—DIED 1895
MAY HER SOUL REST IN PEACE
HER TIME WAS TOO SHORT

"That settled it! I decided that if eighty years was the villagers' idea of a short life, Ayot St. Lawrence was the place for me!"

Told by BENNETT CERF

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GEMS FROM GARCIA

A miracle—it had to be a miracle!

by PATTERSON GREENE

"IT sometimes appears to me," said Father Gonzales, speaking in confidence to Monsignor Tiburico, on the occasion of the latter's monthly visit to the turbulent East Los Angeles parish in which Father Gonzales struggled to keep virtue breathing. "It sometimes appears to me that accident is the particular weapon of Satan."

To Don Tiburico he could talk of these matters of philosophy which, for the most part, had little opportunity to rise to the surface of his mind. He worked among parishioners in whose hearts the capacity for spiritual exaltation dwelt side by side with the capacity for murder and rape, on whose persons an investigating officer of the law not infrequently found a rosary and a dagger in the same pocket. The life of these parishioners was one of explosive immediacy: there was little time in it for consideration of the long view.

But the Monsignor was a man of understanding. He was older, though slimmer of waist, than pudgy Father Gonzales, who was only middle-aged. He was a man of the world, who moved with composure in the circles of the rich.

At the same time, the Monsignor had not let himself drift into that secular cynicism that leaves always the taste of quinine in the soul's mouth. He had learned to accept serenely whatever consequence might follow upon any struggle of any human being, but his serenity had nothing in it of defeat or of indifference. The Monsignor knew that a problem was a problem, and that it did not arrive carrying its own solution on its back . . .

"Accident," Father Gonzales went on, "has time and again taken the ground from under me. My parish, Monsignor, is very poor, and the poor have great need of hope. And for them, the supreme hope of eternal salvation is not enough. It is too far away to keep them sober and chaste. When the stomach is empty and the rent is due, the mind cannot look into the infinite, because today and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow are too much in its way.

"So my people do not pray for the salvation of their souls, or for unity with the divine will. They pray for jobs, and for money. And

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the girls pray for husbands. This is not right. I know it is not right. They take the beautiful gestures of faith, and they turn them into the incantations of witchcraft.

" But what am I to do, Monsignor ? Shall I shut my eyes, and let them come to church and to the sacraments, let them live lives of prayer and grace, and die in sanctity—all for the wrong reasons ? Or shall I take away their greedy little hopes, and hold them to a hope that is beyond their feeling ? Then they will fall away because they are discouraged, and I shall have let them go to hell just because they were incapable of the greater vision.

" I have compromised. Until I can see a better way, I let them have their little greeds and their little superstitions. Some may work through to understanding, and the rest will at least behave themselves.

" There is the case of Garcia, the pawnbroker.

" You have admired the crown on the statue of the Virgin in my shabby little church, and you have wondered that tin and glass should look so much like silver and jewels. The tin of the crown is truly tin, and it is indeed a wonder that Mrs. Rojas, with her artist's hands, has been able to make it look like silver filigree. But the little jewels in the points of her crown—this is a deep secret between us, Monsignor—they are real sapphires !

" When Mrs. Rojas had finished shaping the tin, I told her the crown was beautiful, and that it needed nothing more. But Mrs. Rojas was bent upon jewels. As I told you, she is an artist, and to have anything less than the fulfilment of her dream was a torture to her soul. No one could find the little blue stones that Mrs. Rojas envisioned.

" She took to her bed, and cried all day, and refused to cook. Artists are like that. I do not share their feelings, but I respect them. It is the mission of priests to make the world good, and it is the mission of artists to make it beautiful. They should work together, because without them I do not think there would be much of either the beautiful or the good in all the world.

" Now Mrs. Rojas has a boy in her house whose name is José. She found him in our orphanage, and being an artist herself, she saw that he had gifted hands. He cannot paint, but he can work in metal. You would swear that it is soft under his touch, like clay. So Mrs. Rojas took him to her house to live and to be trained. She would have adopted him and given him a name—the poor boy had none except by courtesy—but the laws were too complicated. Sometimes I have the feeling that laws do more to prevent good than they do to prevent evil, but that is only my bad temper, of course, and I am ashamed of it.

" But José became like a son to her and, more than that, he

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became a pupil, a housekeeper, and a force of discipline for her own children, who were younger than he. You see, until political disturbances reached her, Mrs. Rojas lived in wealth and acquired many accomplishments. But except for the preparation of good food, housekeeping was not among them. She longed for order and cleanliness in her house and in her family, but her hands were powerless. José's hands, it turned out, were gifted for other things than metalwork. He laid them on the house and on the children, and in a short time Mrs. Rojas was living in peace and propriety.

" But there was one shortcoming. José could not cook. So the days went by, and Mrs. Rojas still refused to rise from her bed, and the family grew hungry for the delicious flavours that Mrs. Rojas knew how to impart to the most common food. The children began to fight with one another, and with their neighbours, and after José had washed them, they would go out and rub themselves with dirt.

" Then one day Mrs. Rojas sent for me. She was not only risen from her bed—she was restored to happiness. I heard her singing the Soldiers' Chorus from Faust as I approached the house. When I went in, she led me to her parlour. There was the crown, like shining lace that had somehow been spun from metal; and at its points was the lovely light of blue jewels. I was startled by the beauty of it—as you were, Monsignor, when you first saw it.

" Mrs. Rojas said, ' It is true, Father, we get what we pray for.' And she went on to tell me that in a heap of rubbish, dumped on a vacant lot, José had found an old brooch set with stones of the very colour on which she had set her heart. José had placed them in the crown, and brought it to her as a surprise.

" Mrs. Rojas wrapped the crown carefully in an old silk petticoat, and I carried it to the church. But when I went to place it on the head of the statue, I found that one of the stones was missing. I felt badly, of course, but I did not spend much time looking for it. A stone so small would never be found. I took it to Cuervo, the jeweller. I was sure that among his odds and ends of glass he could find a piece that would match the stones in the crown. I would beg him to put it in, and Mrs. Rojas and José need be none the wiser. They could still feel that the crown was entirely the work of their hands.

" Well—Cuervo looked at the stones, and then he looked closer, and finally examined them through his magnifying glass. Finally he said, ' I can find you a match for these, but I could not afford to give it to you for nothing. These are real sapphires.'

" For a long time I was in such confusion I could say nothing. When I could talk, I thanked Cuervo, picked up the crown and went straight to the house of Mrs. Rojas. I found José washing the outside

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windows, so I could talk to him privately. At first he did not want to go with me, but he is a good boy, and at last he followed me here to my house, and to this very room.

" It did not take long to get the story from him. He was not accustomed to having guilt on his soul, and he was glad to be rid of it.

" The tears of Mrs. Rojas had finally driven him to it. The bad food and the rebellion of the children he could have endured, but he could not bear the suffering of his benefactress. He was haunted by the memory of little stones he had seen at Garcia's when he had gone there to pawn Mr. Rojas' violin. Something told him that these would fill Mrs. Rojas' need. They were set in a brooch that was thrown carelessly amid a pile of odds and ends. José thought they were of no value.

" But Garcia is a shrewd man. He cannot depend for protection on the police, because if he calls the police they will ask him too many questions. So he mixes valuable jewellery with valueless trinkets, and puts bits of rubbish in fine cases, so that thieves will be misled. The brooch, I believe, was worth more than a thousand dollars.

" As I have told you, José's hands work magically with metal. It was no trick for him to make a key to Garcia's shop and enter quietly at night to get the brooch.

" I told him he must restore the jewels to Garcia, and I promised to go with him to temper Garcia's wrath. To tell the truth, I was less concerned about José than about Mrs. Rojas. Garcia might even do bodily harm to José, but once it was done, that would be the end of it. Mrs. Rojas, on the other hand, could lament indefinitely without fatigue.

" I got the crown, and I wrapped it again in the silk petticoat, which my housekeeper had saved because she intended to clean it and wear it. José and I went to the pawnshop.

" I said to Garcia, ' I am returning something which was taken from you through a misunderstanding. You had some blue stones that this boy thought had no money value. He took them, not for himself, but for a sacred object that needed their beauty. You almost became a contributor to the church, Mr. Garcia, and if my memory serves me right, it would have been for the first time. But the contribution should have had your sanction, and we have come to get it. This crown will rest on the head of a statue of the Virgin, and it should be a comfort to your soul to know that you have donated the jewels in it.'

" The moment I mentioned the blue jewels, I had seen the wrath come into Garcia's eyes. I was prepared for much, but even I, who have heard what I have heard—even I grew cold at the stomach from the words that came from Garcia's mouth.

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" But I bore it strictly in my mind that the man had been wronged. Moreover, if he wore himself out on words, he might not use his fists on José. Presently he leaned across the counter to snatch the crown from me.

" I had intended to give it to him, but I wanted him to take it respectfully. So I drew back, and removed the wrapping from it and held it up. The beauty of it startled even Garcia, and he stayed his hands.

" I said, ' The stones are yours, but the crown belongs to the church.'

" Then Garcia finally seized it from me, and held it mockingly over his head. He said, ' If it belongs to the church, let the church make a miracle.' And just then came a ring of the telephone on the wall behind the counter.

" Now this is my point, Monsignor : that telephone of Garcia's was ringing all the time, because Garcia conducted much devious business with persons who did not show themselves by daylight. It was the sort of accident that is forever playing me false when I try to substitute reason for superstition.

" Garcia jumped—I think that under all his bravado, he was a little nervous about his irreverence. So many blasphemers are. Then he put down the crown and answered the telephone. He mumbled a few words and hung up, and came back to the counter wearing a strange look on his face. He looked at the crown with a frightened stare. Presently his face turned yellow, and he ran out behind the store. We could hear him retching.

" He came back wiping his forehead, and he glared at José so violently that I expected his rage to break out at last. But it subsided, and what he finally said was the last thing I expected to hear. He said, ' Take that thing away. There is nothing on it that belongs to me.'

" José was about to protest. But I am not one to argue with good fortune, and I picked up the crown and hurried away with it, pushing José in front of me.

" As soon as I would let him speak, he said, ' But I really stole the jewels, Father. I didn't lie to you. I really stole them. And Garcia has forgiven me. A miracle has happened to Garcia.'

" That made me lose my temper, Monsignor. I really have a bad temper—it is my great affliction, and perhaps that is why God has put me in a parish where there is so much to try it. I have constant exercise in self-control. But I also have my lapses, and poor José bore the brunt of one of them. I told him that if Heaven had miracles to work, it would hardly waste them on Garcia the pawnbroker.

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" Why are these people so eager to believe in miracles, when with all my pleading I cannot get them to believe in vaccination ?

" I got rid of José, and came back to my house. Somehow I knew that Garcia would come to me—and come he did, within an hour. It seems that the telephone call had told him that a horse on which he had placed a bet—a ' long shot,' he called it—had just come in and made him five thousand dollars. He took it as a direct message from Heaven.

" Now Garcia is a changed man. He no longer lends money on stolen property, and he no longer persuades his clients to send their daughters to him in place of defaulted payments. He attends services regularly, and almost any day you may find him kneeling before the statue to whose crown he has given the blue sapphires.

" Perhaps I should be thankful, Monsignor, and not look too deeply into the causes of his change of heart. But I have twinges of conscience ; because as I look at him, kneeling there so devoutly, something tells me he is praying for his horse to come in."

* * *

PASTORAL

Two cows
In a marsh,
Mildly munching
Fodder harsh.
Cow's mother,
Cow's daughter,
Mildly edging
Brackish water.
Mildly munching,
While heron,
Brackish-minded,
Waits like Charon.
Two cows,
Mildly mooing ;
No bull ;
Nothing doing.

OGDEN NASH

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THE SYMBOL OF POWER

Even an Earthly Paradise must have a leader whose name is law

by NEIL BELL

WHEN the five-thousand ton s.s. *Merlin* of the Blue Falcon line foundered in the Pacific after a typhoon had damaged her steering gear and driven her many hundred miles off her course there were but six survivors out of a crew of fifty and a passenger list of nearly two hundred.

These six survivors, washed up on an uninhabited islet far off the track of shipping, were James Spence, the *Merlin*'s captain, a herculean fellow in the early forties; Eddie Raynor, chauffeur to one of the drowned passengers, a fair-haired smallish young man of thirty; George Paston, a middle-aged Civil Servant; Herbert Gale, a solicitor, slightly older than Paston; Charles Fenning, an elderly and retired stockbroker; and Ann Beauchamp who was twenty-two, extremely pretty, and the only child of Sir Claude and Lady Beauchamp (who were among the drowned).

Two mornings after the arrival of these six people on the islet Captain Spence (who had gone down with his ship but had bobbed up again) considered the time had come to put the position plainly to everyone and for this purpose he called them together. He stood under a palm tree, for the heat was tropical, while the others sat a little way off and gave him their full attention.

Spence, who had a reputation in the Service for toughness and would have made two of any of the other men there, regarded his small audience with a look of contemptuous grimness which was not lost upon any one of them. "Well, gentlemen, and Miss Beauchamp," he said; "here we are, six of us, alive, and little damaged; and it's time, I suggest, to look things squarely in the face without pretending they are any better than they are, or any worse.

"We are a long way off the track of ships and it is putting it fairly to say that it is an even chance we may have to remain on this small island the rest of our lives. Let us look at the credit side first: it is a fertile little place with plenty of fruits and fresh water and while the climate is tropical there is ample shade. There are many birds and small animals, doubtless all edible, and there is

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no lack of fish. And there are no wild creatures sizeable enough to be a danger. The chief items on the debit side are that we have no weapons nor any tools to make them with and we shall have to improvise bows and arrows, spears, and fish-hooks, unless we propose to turn vegetarian, which I for one do not. Also we have nothing but our hands with which to build huts, for we shall certainly need them, not only because there is a rainy season but we are in latitudes subject to typhoons, as we know to our cost.

"Now, gentlemen and Miss Beauchamp, every community, however small, must have a leader whose word is law. While we were all aboard the *Merlin* that was precisely the position and I was that leader. I suggest it is still the position. Does anyone dissent from that?" He rested his hands on his hips and looked down on his small attentive audience and to the former amused contempt in his eyes there was now added, or so it seemed to the little group about him, both warning and menace.

As no one spoke Captain Spence smiled faintly and went on: "Very well; thank you for your confidence. Obviously the first thing to be done is to make huts for ourselves. There will be one hut for each person. How to do this with only our bare hands is the problem. I suggest we give all our attention to this matter and meet here this afternoon to discuss it."

A year had passed. The islet presented a different appearance, as did its inhabitants. It now looked, with its huts and clearings and smoke rising slowly into the air, like a human settlement and one whose dwellers were highly civilized. There were little gardens and walks laid out and much had been done in the way of decoration with shells and pieces of rock.

The human beings had changed almost beyond recognition, largely, in the men's case, because of their luxuriant beards. The men still wore trousers much the worse for wear but that was their only garment. Their skins were bronzed, their eyes bright, their steps elastic. Even Charles Fenning, who was in the sixties, looked as alert and vigorous as a man in his prime. To Miss Ann Beauchamp's very decorative appearance both the animal and the vegetable kingdoms had contributed.

The palm tree under which Captain Spence had addressed them a year earlier now stood alone in a small clearing which had come to be recognized as the council chamber where they met whenever, as now, some important matter was to be discussed or certain specific instructions given by Captain Spence.

He did not now stand towering over them as on that first memorable occasion but sat a little apart from them in a sort of chair made from twigs and branches. While he spoke all eyes were

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on him and the attitude of his listeners conveyed that at some time during the past twelve months he had made it roughly and painfully plain that he was master.

"A year ago," he began, "I said that it was an even chance we might be here for the remainder of our lives. I think now that the odds are very different and I will put them at a hundred to one against our ever being rescued. That being so we must look to the future more than we have been doing. We must look to the distant future as well as the immediate. If this community is to survive and to go on surviving, not merely now but for years, for generations, there must be an influx of newcomers: there must be, in short, children. In other words, Miss Beauchamp must take a husband. She will take me. I will myself perform the ceremony this afternoon and there will be a feast this evening. Did you say something, Raynor?"

The little ex-chauffeur rose to his feet and stood at attention. "I did, sir," he said quietly; "I asked if Miss Beauchamp had been consulted."

"That is no business of yours. I have not thrashed you before, Raynor, out of consideration for your size; but you are being insolent. When the others disperse you will stay behind."

"Stow it!" Raynor said defiantly; and as the others gasped at his recklessness, and Spence rose slowly from his chair, he put a hand into his trousers and with stupefying suddenness produced a small revolver. "Don't move, anyone," he said, "I've kept this dark till now. I knew it would be wanted some time. That's now. I said don't move, Spence. You've made a mistake, Spence. You're not marrying Miss Beauchamp. And you're no longer boss. *Don't move!*" And as Spence came at him in a blind rush he fired and the Captain of the *Merlin* pitched almost at his feet and lay still. Raynor rolled him over with his foot: there was a hole in his forehead from which came a slow ooze of blood.

Raynor turned his attention from the dead to the living. "Spence is dead," he said: "I'm boss now. Any objections?" No one spoke. He went on: "The easiest way for me would be to kill you three chaps. It would save me a lot of trouble. But I can't do it. Not in cold blood. I'm not that sort. So unless you get up to any hanky-panky or forget I'm boss you're safe. I'm not going to rush Miss Beauchamp into anything. I'll give her a fortnight to think it over. I want her to marry me of her own free will. During that fortnight I shall sleep on the other side of the island. If anyone attempts to follow me, or gets up to any funny business in the night, I shall kill him. Don't let there be any mistake about that. Don't get it into your heads because I'm not making a clean sweep of you chaps that I'm soft. I'm not. I just can't kill

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a man in cold blood. When my blood's up—but you've seen for yourselves. Well, that's the lot just now. The next meeting will be in two weeks' time, when I hope Miss Beauchamp will have made up her mind."

Twenty years had passed away. King Edward and Queen Ann of the island kingdom of Hoorayvia (a name chosen by the king) had presented to their country four sets of twins, all girls, and eight other children, of whom seven were boys. Happily the twins had come along first so that by this time the other survivors from the *Merlin* were now provided with wives and families; the proudest father of them all being hale and hearty Charles Fenning who at eighty-one had two boys and a girl in his still expectant quiver.

The population of Hoorayvia now numbered thirty-three, all strong and vigorous, and most of the younger ones beautiful. Sickness was unknown and not once had death visited the islanders. There had been accidents, but none more serious than broken arms or legs; and these nature had healed with no other assistance than a few rough splints.

The rule of King Edward and Queen Ann was firm, even severe, but just and impartial. Their power was unquestioned. Never again had King Edward found it necessary to use the revolver, the symbol of his power; or even to threaten its use. Not one of his subjects ever saw it; not the Queen herself. But all knew that it was in the king's possession and that knowledge ensured obedience to his law.

Another twenty years fled away. The inhabitants of Hoorayvia numbered three hundred. Of the original subjects of the King and Queen only Charles Fenning had died, a few days after celebrating his hundredth birthday and the birth (on the same day) of his fifth grandchild. At the feast of celebration he had eaten and drunk too heartily and had died in his sleep. That had not been death's sole visitation during those twenty years; a boy of twelve had been drowned; a girl of seven had fallen from a tree and broken her neck; and a three year old boy had eaten fully and fatally of some poisonous berries. But that was Death's full tally to set against Life's hundreds.

But now Death stood by expectantly, waiting for the biggest prize of all in this Earthly Paradise: for King Edward was sick of a mysterious malady. Water, and but little even of that, was all his stomach could retain. Wasted to a shadow of his old self he lay in the royal bed in the royal hut and knowing that his end was near he sent for his eldest son, a big handsome man in the early thirties.

As soon as they were alone together the king said: "My son,

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before many days I shall be dead. You will be king after me. You inherit a beautiful and happy kingdom. Be, as I have been, firm and just, so that when your time comes to die you may hand on to your son not only your kingdom but an honoured name." He groped under his pillow and drew out the revolver. "Here is the symbol of my power. See that it never leaves your possession: keep it even from your wife."

"Explain it to me, father," his son said.

When the old king had finished his explanation he handed his son the revolver and said: "There, my son, is the precious symbol of your power."

"And the cartridges, father, where are they?" his son asked.

"There are no cartridges. There was but one. With it I shot and killed Captain Spence."

"It is then an empty symbol, father?" his son said.

The dying king smiled. He seemed to be mustering all his strength to speak again but could not do so. And then the lid of his left eye slowly lowered. A moment later a faint exhalation fluttered his lips and he was gone.

* * *

ARGONAUT

FRIENDS abroad who see only an occasional copy of Argosy would welcome the opportunity of receiving it regularly each month, and to make this possible, a number of subscriptions have been specially set aside for readers overseas.

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A TRUCE WITH TIME

For lovers star-gathering — till the stroke of twelve!

Unquiet my heart
When she is near,
As the woods
In the young year.

Wilder my thoughts
Than birds that soar
In blue air
By the lake shore.

Would she but hear
The songs I made
By the brook
In the hazel glade.

O heart be still
And let her pass,
As grey mist
On the sweet grass.

And dream of her
With dark eyes,
When stars come
And a wind cries.

JOHN IRVINE

Milady's Pleasure

Rastignac found himself in a perplexing situation many young men must have known. Madame de Nucingen might love him or be playing with him, but she had made him go through all the agonies of a real passion by displaying for him all the resources of feminine diplomacy used in Paris. She had compromised herself in the public eye by keeping near her the cousin of Madame de Beauséant, but she hesitated about giving him in fact the rights he appeared to enjoy. For a month she had so excited the senses of Eugène that at last her attack had reached his heart . . .

Was that a calculated move? No; women are always genuine, even in the midst of their greatest duplicity, because they are yielding to some natural feeling.

It is so natural for a woman of Paris, at the very moment when passion is hurrying her along, to hesitate over taking the plunge, to

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make proof of the heart of the man to whom she is going to entrust her future!

She was unwilling that Eugène should think of her as an easy conquest, for the very reason that he knew that she had belonged to De Marsay.

Whatever her reasons, Delphine played with Rastignac and enjoyed playing, doubtless because she knew she was loved and could certainly put an end to her lover's vexation, when it suited a woman's royal pleasure to do so.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC, 1799-1850, *Le Père Goriot*

On Second Thoughts

I painted her a gushing thing,
With years about a score;
I little thought to find they were
At least a dozen more;
My fancy gave her eyes of blue,
A curly auburn head:
I came to find the blue a green,
The auburn turned a red.

She has the bear's ethereal grace,
The bland hyena's laugh,
The footstep of the elephant,
The neck of a giraffe;
I love her still, believe me,
Though my heart its passion hides;
"She's all my fancy painted her,"
But oh! how much besides!

LEWIS CARROLL, 1832-1898

Widders

"Vy, I'll tell you what, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, senior, "There never was a nicer woman as a widder, than that 'ere second wentur o' mine—and all I can say on her now, is, that as she was such an uncommon pleasant widder, it's a great pity she ever changed her condition. She don't act as a wife, Sammy . . .

"Take example by your father, my boy, and be very careful o' widders all your life, specially if they've kept a public house, Samivel."

CHARLES DICKENS, 1812-1870, *Pickwick Papers*

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Not So Green

The young Eskimo does not often, or violently "fall in love." He seeks a wife, and selects her chiefly for her strength and health, that she may aid and help him in the terrible toil and the endless endurance which the cold climate and barren environment compel.

Having selected his wife he marches to her abode, or watches and lies in wait for her, seizes her by her long, strong hair, or her fur garments, and drags her to his lair of ice or tent of skin.

An indolent, retiring, or sybarite Greenlander will employ or depute a party of friends to seize the woman for him.

L. JORDAN MILN, *Wooings and Weddings in Many Climes*

First Love

Your eyes are black like water-melon pips,
Your lips are red like the red flesh of water-melons,
Your loins are smooth like smooth-rind water-melons.

You are more beautiful than my favourite among the mares,
Your buttocks are sleeker and firmer,
Like her your movements are on legs of light steel.

Come and sit at my hearth, and I will celebrate your coming ;
I will choose from the hundred flocks of each a hundred,
Passing at the foot of the Himalayas,

The two most silky and most beautiful great sheep.
We will go to the temple and sacrifice one of the two
To the god Pandu, that you may have many children ;

And I will kill the other and roast it whole,
My most fair rose-tree serving as a spit.
I will ask the prettiest eaters and the prettiest drinkers ;

And while they eat and drink greatly for three days,
I will wind silver rings upon your arms and feet
And hang a chain of river gold about your neck.

Popular song of Kafiristan,
translated by E. POWYS MATHERS

At One Remove

It is difficult to satisfy one's appetite by painting pictures of cakes.

Old Chinese Proverb

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NEVER COME MONDAY

You had to admit it was all tarrible irregular

by ERIC KNIGHT

THE first one to notice it was old Capper Wambley, and Capper was a very important man. He was the knocker-up in the village of Allerby Brig—that is to say, he got up early every morning and went round with his pole, tapping on the bedroom windows and waking up the people in time for them to get to work. And this particular morning old Capper knew there was something wrong.

He felt it first as he stepped outside his cottage and coughed in the dark to clear his lungs, and looked up at the sky to see what kind of weather it was. He felt that there was something wrong with the day, and then he decided what it was. It was still Sunday.

For a moment or two he felt fair flabbergasted at this, for he remembered that the day before had been Sunday, too.

" Ba gum," Capper said to himself. " This is a champion do, it is an' all. No doubt summat should be done."

Now old Capper Wambley was very old, so he sat down on the edge of the kerb, and after a while he came to the conclusion that what ought to be done was to think about it. So he began thinking about the very strange event.

" Now," he said to himself, " it don't seem reasonable and proper that we should hev two Sundays in a row. Let us see if we can get it sorted out. Now the thing for a chap to do to prove it, is to decide what is the difference between a Sunday morning and a weekday morning."

Old Capper thought and thought, and he saw that the only difference between the two was that on a weekday morning he wakened the people up, and on a Sunday morning he didn't.

" So, if Ah doan't wakken the village up this morning, it *is* a Sunday morning," he said to himself.

It was a very important decision. But once Capper had decided, he knew he must be right, for he was a Yorkshireman.

" Because Ah'm net wakkening onybody, it maun be a Sunday morning. And because it's a Sunday morning, Ah maun't wakken onybody up. So no matter which way a lad looks at it, the answer cooms out that it's Sunday."

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But now he had decided it was Sunday, Capper saw that not wakening people up might not be sufficient. " Some of them may wake up of their own accord," he thought, " and not knowing this is the second Sunday in a row, will go walking down to the mill. And God knows they have to get up early often enough, and it would be a tarrible shame not to let them have this extra piece of rest that is so miraculously sent."

So old Capper got up slowly from the kerb, and went stomping down the street, and stopped at his first call, which was the home of John Willie Braithwaite, who was the fireman at the mill. Old Capper got his long pole with the trident of wire at the end and lifting it so that the wire rested against the upstairs window-pane, began twirling and twisting the pole in the palms of his hands so that the wire clacked and chattered fit to wake the soundest sleeper.

Soon the window went up, and John Willie Braithwaite's head popped out of the window.

" Ah'm wakkened," John Willie said. " Whet time is't ? "

Now old Capper could see that John Willie wasn't awake, but was just moving in his sleep the way men did from their tiredness and weariness of getting up before dawn. But he knew it didn't matter this morning.

" Ah just wakkened ye to tell ye it's another Sunday morning," old Capper said. " Soa tha c'n goa on back to bed an' sleep i' peace."

At this John Willie Braithwaite closed the window and went back to bed and got in beside his wife without ever having really wakened up. Meanwhile old Capper was on his rounds, busily going up and down the village in the not-yet-dawn, rapping and tapping on all his customers' windows, and telling them they needn't get up because it was still Sunday.

Naturally, the news caused quite a little bit of fuss. Some people gladly went back to sleep, but others woke up and got dressed, remembering that the day before had been Sunday. They packed their breakfasts and put on their clogs and their smocks and their shawls and went clacking up the streets until they got by the Green, and there they saw old Capper Wambley.

" Now lad," they said, " whet's t'idea o' telling us this is another Sunday ? "

" Well, it is," Capper said.

" How does'ta know it is ? " Golliker Dilkes asked him.

" Ah can't explain it, but, Ah'm full sure summat varry wonderful has happened, and it is," old Capper told them.

Some people were inclined to believe Capper, and some were not.

" Now lewk here, Capper," Golliker said, " Ah doan't but

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admit that it does seem Sundayish, like, but how are we off to be sure ? "

Old Capper thought a while. Then he saw the answer.

" Well, here's the way us can tell," he said. " Now if this be a weekday, the mill whistle'll blaw the fifteen minutes, wean't it ? "

" Aye," they agreed.

" But if it be a Sunday, like Ah say, the mill whistle wean't blaw the fifteen minutes, will it ? "

They all agreed that was true. So they stood round old Capper, who had one of the few watches in the village, and they waited. They all looked at his watch and saw it said twenty to six, then nineteen to six, then eighteen and seventeen and sixteen. And the second hand went round and finally it said quarter to six. But no whistle blew—largely because John Willie Braithwaite, who was supposed to be there at 5-30 and get up steam and pull the whistle-cord, was still home and sleeping warmly beside his wife.

" Well," old Capper says, " that shows it maun be a Sunday, and now ye can all away hoam and get another hour's sleep."

So they all went home, glad to get another hour's sleep, and full of praises for old Capper, because he had had the sense to perceive that it was another Sunday instead of a Monday morning.

Old Capper went off home himself, and was just making himself a little bit of breakfast when Rowlie Helliwell came in.

" Capper," Rowlie said, " Ah hear that tha discovered this is another Sunday."

" Aye, that's soa," Capper replied.

" Well," Rowlie went on, " isn't heving two Sundays in a row just a varry little bit irregular, as tha maught say ? "

" It is that, lad," Capper told him. " But tha maun remember us is living in varry unusual times."

" We are that," Rowlie agreed. " And Ah'm glad tha discovered it in time. For if tha hedn't, Ah would ha' gone and rung the school-bell like a gert lummox, thinking it were a Monday. But now Ah know it's a Sunday, Ah maun goa and ring the church-bell."

" Ah should say that all sounds right and proper to me," old Capper agreed.

" Me too," Rowlie said. " And Ah thank thee for saving me from a gert mistake."

" Eigh, it's nowt, lad," old Capper said modestly.

So away went Rowlie, and Capper settled down to his breakfast, but he was soon interrupted again. Some of the villagers, all dressed in their Sunday clothes, came up and told him that people from other villages who worked at the Allerby Brig mill were at the mill gates insisting it was Monday. So Capper picked up a bit of bloater to eat on the way and went down there and told the people

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it was Sunday.

"But if it's Sunday in Allerby Brig, what day is it i' Wuxley Green?" someone asked.

"Aye, and i' Rombeck an' Tannerley?" someone else added.

"Well, happen it's Sunday theer, too," Capper told them. "Only you didn't notice it. When two Sundays come in a row ye could hardly blame a chap for mistaking the second one for Monday. Soa Ah advise ye to goa back and enjoy Sunday."

"Well," said Tich Mothersole, "Ah'm reight glad to hev another day o' rest; but Ah wish Ah'd known it afore Ah started, because ma Mary Alice allus brings me ma breakfast to bed o' Sunday morning."

"Nay, if tha hurries tha's still time enow to gate hoam and pop back into bed," the Capper pointed out. "Then the minute thy wife sees thee theer she'll knaw it's a Sunday and she'll up and hev a bit o' bacon o't' fire i' noa time."

They were just ready to move away when Mr. Bloggs arrived. Mr. Bloggs was late, but then, that didn't matter, because he lived in another town, and Mr. Bloggs owned the mill.

"'Ere, 'ere, my good men," he said. "What's all this, 'ey? What's the idea you aren't all in the mill?"

So they explained to him that a second Sunday had arrived.

"Why, what nonsense," he said. "When I left 'ome it was a Monday. 'Ow can it be Sunday 'ere when it was a Monday in Puttersleigh?"

"Ah doan't knaw," old Capper said. "Unless," he added slowly, "it happens to be Sunday in Puttersleigh too, and tha didn't realize it."

"It's Monday, I tell you. Come on in to work," Mr. Bloggs shouted. "How can it be two Sundays in a row?"

"It's Sunday," they said.

"It's not. It's Monday. And any man 'oo ain't in this mill in five minutes is discharged."

"It's Sunday," they said.

"How can it be Sunday?" he shouted. "It's impossible."

He stared at them, and just then they heard the boom—boom—boom of the church-bell ringing for matins.

"That proves," they said, "it's a Sunday, and it'd be a sin to work on Sunday."

So they all turned round and went back to their homes, leaving Mr. Bloggs alone by his mill gates. He stood there, shaking his head, and finally he clumped upstairs and opened the office himself and sat down all alone at his desk to think the whole matter out.

Meanwhile in the homes of the village the people knew that since it was a Sunday they would have to do all the things that one does

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on a Sunday. The men rested at home in comfortable chairs, and the women started mixing Yorkshire puddings for the big noontime dinner. The children were dressed in their nicest clothes and instead of going to school they went up to the church for Sunday school. Ethel Newligate, who taught the Sunday school, went with them. Mr. Sims, the school-teacher, hearing the church-bell, knew it must be Sunday and off he went to play the organ. Rowlie Helliwell was already there to pump the bellows. The church folk went up and stood in the pews. So the old Reverend Mr. Stoninghorn put on his cassock and surplice. He was a little puzzled as to whether it should be now the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany or the Fourth, but he compromised by giving the same service as he had done the day before, and preaching the same sermon. And many of the church folk said the sermon sounded a right lot nicer the second time than the first, because you could see just where it was going in a manner of speaking.

All this time, of course, the mill was closed, but Mr. Bloggs wasn't idle. He picked up his telephone, which was the only one in the village, and asked the operator to get Greenwich Observatory. Mr. Bloggs always liked to be exact. When he got them he asked them what day it was, and they told him that it was Monday.

Armed with this fact, Mr. Bloggs went out and met the people just as they were coming out of church.

"Now see here," he said. "It's no use pretending. This is a Monday."

But they pointed out that they were just coming out of church, so how could it be Monday?

At this Mr. Bloggs got so angry that he shouted at them, and the noise brought the Rev. Mr. Stoninghorn to the church steps.

"You must not profane the Sabbath," he said, looking very handsome in his white surplice, and with his long white hair like a dandelion gone to seed.

Mr. Bloggs began to see he could get nowhere against Yorkshiremen by blustering, so he took another tack. He pointed out to the minister that while this may be Sunday, one would have to admit that it was a little bit unusual to have two Sundays in a row. Mr. Stoninghorn admitted this, and he agreed that a meeting ought to be called to look into the matter.

So it was announced through the village that a meeting was to be called at the school for four o'clock that afternoon. The Rev. Mr. Stoninghorn was asked to preside, but inasmuch as he was unsure whether or not it was the Sabbath, he declined. So Mr. Polkiby, the schoolmaster, agreed to take over and run a meeting in which everyone should have a chance to state his views on whether it was

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or wasn't Sunday.

At meeting-time there wasn't a seat to be had, and straight after Mr. Polkiby opened, Mr. Bloggs got up and stated that it was Monday, and he could prove it because he had called up the Greenwich Observatory. Then Taylor Huckle, the publican got up and said it was Monday, because yesterday had been Sunday and the day after Sunday had always been Monday, for years and years, man and boy, as far back as he could remember.

After this there was a wait, because nobody liked to get up in front of so many people and put in their ha'porth; though a lot of people were dying to, because they knew Huckle was in favour of Monday, for if it were Sunday he'd have to go on early closing hours.

So there was a long wait until somebody said: "Where's Sam Small?"

"Here Ah am," said a voice at the back of the hall, and they all spoke up and said: "Come on, Sam, let's hev thy opinion."

Now this Sam Small was a man whose word was worth listening to at any time, and on any subject. He was the inventor of the Sam Small Self-Doffing Spindle and had made a pile of brass from it, and was much travelled, not only having been to London and other parts but to foreign lands as well on a cruise. So they waited politely as Sam walked down the aisle and clambered up on the stage.

"Well, lads," he said, "it's this way. A day's a day, but then again, it ain't, in a manner of speaking. The time Ah went round t'world, one day it were Tuesday, and the next morning the captain said it were Thursday—and so it were, because Ah've nivver yet found that lost day. And on t'other hand, a lad on the ship told me if we'd gone round the world t'other way, we should of hed two Tuesdays. Now if we can have two Tuesdays when we're going round the world, Ah maintain we maught just as easy hev two Sundays when the world is going round us, which ivvery scientist knaws it is doing."

"Piffle," said Mr. Bloggs.

"Oh, aye?" asked Sam, his dander getting up. "Can tha tell me what day it is now i' Japan?"

"It's Monday," Mr. Bloggs said.

"Oh, pardon me, Mr. Bloggs," the schoolmaster said. "Just as a matter of academic accuracy . . ." and here he studied his watch carefully . . . "but in Japan now it is Tuesday."

"Tuesday?" roared Mr. Bloggs.

"There, tha sees," Sam said. "There don't seem to me to be noa sense to this day stuff. If it's Monday, as tha says, down i' Greenwich; and if it's Tuesday, as t'schoolmaster says, i' Japan, then Ah says it's just as liable to be Sunday up here."

"Nonsense," yelled Mr. Bloggs. "I know what the matter is.

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You're all lazy and want a day off. So you call it Sunday."

"Nay, lad," Sam replied. "There's six weekdays to one Sunday, so it seems to me like it were six to one i' thy favour that we'd hev an extra workday i'stead of an extra rest-day. Simply because tha lost, tha maun't be a bad sport about it."

At this the people applauded Sam, and seeing he was at a good place to stop, he got down off the platform.

"Fiddlesticks," Mr. Bloggs said, now thoroughly angry. "If this is Sunday, then what's tomorrow? Is it Monday or Tuesday? Or do we lose a day?"

"Happen Ah'm the man to clear that up," the Capper said, rising to his feet. "Us doesn't skip noa day at all. T'thing is that t'days o't'week have gate tired o'turning, soa now they've stood still and wean't goa no further, they wean't."

"How ridiculous," Mr. Bloggs snorted. "If that were so we'd get no further and tomorrow would be Sunday, too, wouldn't it?"

The Capper scratched his head and thought a moment. Then he looked up quickly. "Ba gum, lad," he said. "Tha's hit t'nail o't'yead. Tomorrow is off to be Sunday."

At this the meeting broke up, and everyone started for home. They crowded round old Capper and asked him about the next day.

"Ah'm reight sure it'll be Sunday, lads," old Capper said. "But when Ah coom round to wakken ye up, Ah'll tell ye."

"Nay, Ah gate a better idea," John Willie Braithwaite said. "If it's a Sunday, it'd be a fair shame to disturb a little bit o' good extra sleep. That'd mak' it as bad as a weekday 'most. So supposing, if it's another Sunday, just thee doan't bother to coom round—and when tha doesn't coom we'll knaw for sure it's Sunday."

"Aye, that's fine," old Capper said, "but Ah'll lose all me collections that way."

They all saw that was so, but they agreed that even if it kept on being Sunday, they would pay old Capper just the same as if it had become the rotation of weekdays and he'd made his rounds.

"Nay, Ah couldn't tak' it," Capper protested.

"Nay, we'd like thee to," they said.

"Well, if ye say," Capper agreed. "But how about lads i't'other villages. It's hard on them thinking it's a weekday and walking all the way here to find it's a Sunday."

"Well," John Willie said, "we'll form a committee, like, right now, and the members will each tak' a village and goa reight ovver theer and tell ivveryone that it's staying Sunday these days—that the days o't'week is stuck, like."

Everyone thought it a good and orderly idea, and so it was done.

The next morning people in the village woke up, and they lay abed and listened. But they heard no trident of wire chattering in

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the greyness of the morning, nor old Capper's voice wheezing: "'Awf pest fower, ist'a oop?" They waited but they heard no clogs clattering on the cobbles, and no whistle at the mill saying that if they didn't get there in fifteen minutes they'd be locked out.

So they knew it must be Sunday again, and they went back to sleep, and the next thing they knew was the church-bell ringing once more. So that made it Sunday and they were sure of it.

And in the other towns round about, the people didn't go to work, and so they knew it was Sunday, too. They put on their best clothes, and did a bit of gardening and the men mended things about the house and the children didn't go to school, and everyone had a fine rest, so that their work-tired bodies began to grow glad and proud again.

The next day the news that the days of the week were stuck at Sunday had spread all over Yorkshire, and was percolating up to the Tyneside where the shipworkers were, and over into Lancashire where the youngsters worked before cotton mills and looms, and down into the Black Country where the men hauled at steel and went down into the mines, and down into Staffordshire where they toiled at the potteries and the car factories.

The newspapers sent men round to find out what had happened to the lost weekdays, and one of them came to the village and looked up old Capper. At first he laughed, until Ian Cawper came along. Ian Cawper was the biggest man in Yorkshire for sure, and happen the biggest and strongest man in all England without doubt. So he just asked the newspaper lad for a penny, and then he bent the penny in two, and the newspaper lad stopped laughing.

"Nah, lad," Ian said. "Happen tha'd better tellyphone thy paper that this is Sunday."

"Indeed I will," the young man said, very appreciatively.

Now although the wonderful thing that it was still Sunday found great gratification in the hearts of all the men who worked long hours handling steel and wood and cotton and iron and glass and fabric and paper and silk, at furnaces and forges and foundries and looms and jennies and sides and presses and drills and lathes, there were some men who were quite upset by the miraculous happening. And in spite of the fact that everyone else in the country now saw that a beautiful series of Sundays had happened, these men kept on trying to persuade everyone that they were just ordinary days of the week that people merely *thought* were Sundays.

These men soon saw that if it kept on being Sunday they'd never be able to make any more battleships and gas-bombs and motor cars and aeroplanes and wireless sets and badminton rackets and all the rest of the things that are civilizing influences upon the

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world. And if they didn't make those things, they wouldn't be able to go on making more money than they had already.

This was quite an abhorrent state of affairs. So they went to the Prime Minister about it.

"I am thoroughly in accord with religion—one day a week," one of them said.

"Hear, hear," the others said.

"But, Mr. Prime Minister, think of my stockholders! Many are orphans. Many are widows. If my factory doesn't make money, these poor people will be destitute—because always having drawn dividends, they've never had to learn how to work. We cannot let them suffer."

"Gentlemen," said the Prime Minister, "you may rest assured that His Majesty's Government will do all within its power to safeguard that industry and commerce which is the backbone of our nation—indeed, of our Empire."

Then the Prime Minister went away and thought. This Prime Minister thought a lot of things all at once. Suddenly, he called his secretary and said:

"Carrington-Smaithe. It is a Sunday today, I hear, and it will be a Sunday again tomorrow. Pack my things. We're going away for the week-end."

"But, sir," said the secretary, "what about the International Crisis? We have two ultimatums which must be answered immediately."

"Dear me," said the Prime Minister. "That is a nuisance; but all the world knows the British week-end is inviolate, and if this is Sunday, as it seems to me it must be, then I won't be able to answer till the week-end is over."

"But when will it stop being Sunday, sir?"

"Well, Carrington-Smaithe, how long will it take our fastest cruiser squadron to get to that troublesome part of the world?"

"Oh, about thirty-six more hours, sir."

"Hmmmph! Then I think it will stop being Sunday in about thirty-six more hours."

And with this the Prime Minister caught the five-fifteen train and went off to the country. And when the newspapers heard of it they printed it, and all the people in England—in fact, in all the world—knew that it was officially Sunday.

And back in Allerby Brig all the people were that proud of old Capper Wambley. For hadn't he been the first man in all the land to notice that the days of the week were stuck and every day kept turning up a Sunday.

And all over the land toil-weary people sighed with happiness at

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their escape from industrial chains. They rested their tired bodies. Some went to church every day. In the cities people took buses out into the country and had picnics. The grown-ups lay in the sun and the children played in the fields, and the young men and women walked in the lanes and made love. There was only one flaw. Being Sundays, the pubs had to go on Sunday-closing hours.

And all that time the Prime Minister sat in his garden and read detective novels, or snoozed in the sun with a couple of his favourite spaniels at his feet, until there came a wireless message.

"Sign here," said the boy.

So the Prime Minister signed, and then he got a code book and decoded the message. Immediately he had done so he called his secretary and said:

"Carrington-Smaithe! What day is today?"

"Sunday, sir," the secretary said.

"Nonsense," said the Prime Minister. "I am tired of this shilly-shallying. If this goes on, we shall have a Constitutional Crisis."

"A Constitutional Crisis, sir?"

"Yes, Carrington-Smaithe. So you'd better pack and we'll get back to the City. We must act immediately. I shall issue a statement that His Majesty's Government hereby declares officially that today is Friday, and tomorrow shall be officially Saturday, and the days of the week must now go on officially in their regular and accustomed order."

"But isn't this really Sunday, sir? Hasn't a miraculous thing happened that has stopped the days of the week from arriving?"

"I don't know, my boy. But I do know this. Even if it is Sunday, and we all, everywhere, decide to call it Monday or Tuesday, then it becomes Monday or Tuesday because we all believe it is Monday or Tuesday."

"Yes, I see, sir."

And so the secretary packed, and the Prime Minister went back to London where he now could answer his ultimatums quite forcefully, and all the newspapers of the land carried the news that today was Friday and tomorrow would be Saturday—officially.

It wasn't until the next morning that this news reached Allerby Brig, where it had all started. Mr. Bloggs got the news first, of course, and so he ordered the siren blown at the mill. So everybody hurried off to the mill because if you weren't there fifteen minutes after the siren went you were locked out and lost half a day's pay.

But as they trooped into the yard, old Capper stopped them.

"Hold on a minute, mates," he said. "Just what day is it?"

"Now come on in to work," Mr. Bloggs called. "It's Saturday."

"Nay," Capper said. "Yesterday were Sunday, so today

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maun be Monday, onless us's started slipping and now we're off to hev t'days backwards."

This remark of Capper's got everyone mixed up again and some said it was Saturday and some Monday, while some still stuck to Sunday.

The upshot was that they decided to call Sam Small again to get his opinion. Sam arrived in about half an hour and heard all sides. Then he looked round and spoke in the voice of one who is used to handling such matters.

"There's nobbut one thing to dew, lads," he said. "And Ah'm the chap that's off to dew it."

With that he walked into the office, and picking up the telephone, he said: "Connect me with His Majesty the King."

Before you could wink the connection was made.

"Is this His Majesty the King?" Sam asked.

"Why, Sammywell Small, lad!" said the King, recognizing the voice. "If it doan't dew my heart and sowl good to hear thy voice again. How's'ta been, Sam lad?"

"Reight nicely, Your Majesty," Sam said.

"And how's that reight bonnie wife o' thine, Dally?" asked the King, who, as you will have noticed, spoke the dialect fluently. It is things like that that make a good king.

"Dally's reight well," Sam said. "And how's thy missus and bairns, if tha doan't mind the question."

"Nay, Sam lad, Ah'm glad tha axed ma," the King said. "They're champion."

"Well, Ah'm glad to hear that," Sam answered.

"Well, Sam," the King said, "Ah doan't suppose tha called me oop just for idle barneying. Whet c'n Ah dew for thee, lad?"

"Well, it's this way, Your Majesty," Sam said. "Ah hoap tha'll net think ma gormless for axing, but could'ta tell me just whet day o't'week it is for thee."

"Eigh, Sam," the King said, "Ah doan't monkey wi' things like that. But Ah've just gate official information that today's Sat'day."

"Your Majesty," said Sam, "if Sat'day's good enow for thee, then there's noa moar argyment. Thank you varry much."

"Net at all, Sam," the King said. "And by the way, Sam Small, it is our royal wish that tha doesn't wait soa long afore tha calls me oop again. There's been sivveral things lately Ah would ha liked thy opinion on. When's'ta off to coom to Lunnon?"

"Nay, Your Majesty, Ah give oop travelling," Sam replied.

"Too bad, Sam. Too bad. Well, give me a ring soom time soon, will'ta?"

"That Ah will, lad."

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" Well, so long," said the King.

" So long, Your Majesty," said Sam.

All during this conversation, of course, the people of the village had been crowding breathlessly round the door of the office, listening to Sam. And right in the forefront was Mr. Bloggs.

" Well, what did he say ? " Mr. Bloggs breathed as Sam hung up.

" He said," said Sam, " that today was Sat'day."

" There, didn't I tell you ? " Mr. Bloggs shouted. " Now, doesn't that make it Saturday ? "

Everyone thought it did, but they weren't quite sure. They thought the matter over, and then John Willie Braithwaite said :

" T'only trouble is, it doan't *feel* like Sat'day to me."

" But I tell you it is officially Saturday," Mr. Bloggs cried.

" Wait a minute, lads," Sam Small put in. " Now Ah doan't wark here, soa Ah play no favourites. But Ah c'n tell ye for sure how ye'll all knaw it's a Sat'day."

" How can we tell ? " they asked.

" Why it's that simple," Sam replied. " Ye'all knaw that ivvery Sat'day morning, at a quarter to twelve, ye get paid a week's wages. Now if soa be this is Sat'day, Mr. Bloggs will begin paying each man a week's money exactly ten minutes from now. And, on t'other hand, then if he doan't start paying a week's brass i' ten minutes—it can't be Sat'day—and the chances are it's off to keep on being Sunday for a long time."

" Outrageous," Mr. Bloggs cried.

He argued and shouted, but they stood and shook their heads and said that if it were a Saturday they'd draw a week's pay at exactly a quarter to twelve, as they always did on Saturdays. And finally Mr. Bloggs, seeing no other way of getting the days of the week started properly again, gave in and paid off each man and woman and girl and boy.

By the time they were paid it was Saturday noon, and so they all trooped as usual down the stairs of the mill and into the yard to go home. And there old Capper stopped them.

" But if it's a Saturday today, lads and lasses, what day is it tomorrow ? "

" It'll be Sunday," they all roared.

" Now ain't that champion ? " old Capper beamed. " If it's Sunday we'll all be able to lie abed late and get a bit o' extra sleep for a change."

★*Another amusing story of these delightful Yorkshire folk next month. " Mary Ann and the Duke," by ERIC KNIGHT, in your AUGUST ARGOSY.*

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THE RED ROOM

It seemed there was no ghost there at all, but worse, far worse

by H. G. WELLS

"I CAN assure you," said I, "that it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me." And I stood up before the fire with my glass in my hand.

"It is your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm, and glanced at me askance.

"Eight-and-twenty years," said I, "I have lived, and never a ghost have I seen as yet."

The old woman sat staring hard into the fire, her pale eyes wide open. "Ay," she broke in; "and eight-and-twenty years you have lived and never seen the likes of this house, I reckon. There's a many things to see, when one's still but eight-and-twenty." She swayed her head slowly from side to side. "A many things to see and sorrow for."

I half suspected the old people were trying to enhance the spiritual terrors of their house by their droning insistence. I put down my empty glass on the table and looked about the room, and caught a glimpse of myself, abbreviated and broadened to an impossible sturdiness, in the queer old mirror at the end of the room. "Well," I said, "if I see anything tonight, I shall be so much the wiser. For I come to the business with an open mind."

"It's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm once more.

I heard the sound of a stick and a shambling step on the flags in the passage outside, and the door creaked on its hinges as a second old man entered, more bent, more wrinkled, more aged even than the first. He supported himself by a single crutch, his eyes were covered by a shade, and his lower lip, half-averted, hung pale and pink from his decaying yellow teeth. He made straight for an armchair on the opposite side of the table, sat down clumsily, and began to cough. The man with the withered arm gave this newcomer a short glance of positive dislike; the old woman took no notice of his arrival, but remained with her eyes fixed steadily on the fire.

"I said—it's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm, when the coughing had ceased for a while.

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"It's my own choosing," I answered.

The man with the shade became aware of my presence for the first time, and threw his head back for a moment and sideways, to see me. I caught a momentary glimpse of his eyes, small and bright and inflamed. Then he began to cough and splutter again.

"Why don't you drink?" said the man with the withered arm, pushing the beer towards him. The man with the shade poured out a glassful with a shaky arm that splashed half as much again on the deal table. A monstrous shadow of him crouched upon the wall and mocked his action as he poured and drank. I must confess I had scarcely expected these grotesque custodians. The three of them made me feel uncomfortable, with their gaunt silences, their bent carriage, their evident unfriendliness to me and to one another.

"If," said I, "you will show me to this haunted room of yours, I will make myself comfortable there."

The old man with the cough jerked his head back so suddenly that it startled me, and shot another glance of his red eyes at me from under the shade; but no one answered me. I waited a minute, glancing from one to the other.

"If," I said a little louder, "if you will show me to this haunted room of yours, I will relieve you from the task of entertaining me."

"There's a candle on the slab outside the door," said the man with the withered arm, looking at my feet as he addressed me. "But if you go to the red room tonight—"

"This night of all nights!" said the old woman.

"You go alone."

"Very well," I answered. "And which way do I go?"

"You go along the passage for a bit," said he, "until you come to a door, and through that is a spiral staircase, and half way up that is a landing and another door covered with baize. Go through that and down the long corridor to the end, and the red room is on your left up the steps."

"Have I got that right?" I said, and repeated his directions. He corrected me in one particular.

"And are you really going?" said the man with the shade, looking at me again for the third time, with that queer, unnatural tilting of the face.

"This night of all nights!" said the old woman.

"It is what I came for," I said, and moved towards the door. As I did so, the old man with the shade rose and staggered round the table, so as to be closer to the others and to the fire. At the door I turned and looked at them, and saw they were all close together, dark against the firelight, staring at me over their shoulders, with an intent expression on their ancient faces.

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"Good night," I said, opening the door.

"It's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm.

I left the door wide open until the candle was well alight, and then I shut them in and walked down the chilly, echoing passage.

I must confess that the oddness of these three old pensioners in whose charge her ladyship had left the castle, and the deep-toned, old-fashioned furniture of the housekeeper's room in which they foregathered, affected me in spite of my efforts to keep myself in a matter-of-fact frame of mind. They seemed to belong to another age, an older age, an age when things spiritual were different from this of ours, less certain; an age when omens and witches were credible, and ghosts beyond denying. Their very existence was spectral; the cut of their clothing, fashions born in dead brains. The ornaments and conveniences of the room about them were ghostly—the thoughts of vanished men, which still haunted rather than participated in the world of today.

With an effort I dispelled such thoughts. The long, draughty subterranean passage was chilly and dusty, and my candle flared and made the shadows cower and quiver. The echoes rang up and down the spiral staircase, and a shadow came sweeping up after me, and one fled before me into the darkness overhead. I came to the landing and stopped for a moment, listening to a rustling that I fancied I heard; then, satisfied of the absolute silence, I pushed open the baize-covered door and stood in the corridor.

The effect was scarcely what I expected, for the moonlight, coming in by the great window on the grand staircase, picked out everything in vivid black shadow or silvery illumination. Everything was in its place; the house might have been deserted yesterday instead of eighteen months ago. There were candles in the sockets of the sconces, and whatever dust had gathered on the carpets or upon the polished flooring was distributed so evenly as to be invisible in the moonlight.

I was about to advance, and stopped abruptly. A bronze group stood upon the landing, hidden from me by the corner of the wall, but its shadow fell with marvellous distinctness upon the white panelling and gave me the impression of someone crouching to waylay me. I stood rigid for half a minute perhaps. Then, with my hand in the pocket that held my revolver, I advanced, only to discover a Ganymede and Eagle glistening in the moonlight. That incident for a time restored my nerve, and a porcelain Chinaman on a buhl table, whose head rocked silently as I passed him, scarcely startled me.

The door of the red room and the steps up to it were in a shadowy corner. I moved my candle from side to side, in order to see clearly the nature of the recess in which I stood before

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opening the door. Here it was, thought I, that my predecessor was found, and the memory of that story gave me a sudden twinge of apprehension. I glanced over my shoulder at the Ganymede in the moonlight, and opened the door of the red room rather hastily, with my face half-turned to the pallid silence of the landing.

I entered, closed the door behind me at once, turned the key I found in the lock within, and stood with the candle held aloft, surveying the scene of my vigil, the great red room of Lorraine Castle, in which the young duke had died. Or, rather, in which he had begun his dying, for he had opened the door and fallen headlong down the steps I had just ascended.

That had been the end of his vigil, of his gallant attempt to conquer the ghostly tradition of the place, and never, I thought, had apoplexy better served the ends of superstition. And there were other and older stories that clung to the room, back to the half-credible beginning of it all, the tale of a timid wife and the tragic end that came to her husband's jest of frightening her.

Looking round that large, sombre room, with its shadowy window bays, its recesses and alcoves, one could well understand the legends that had sprouted in its black corners, its germinating darkness. My candle was a little tongue of light in its vastness, that failed to pierce the opposite end of the room, and left an ocean of mystery and suggestion beyond its island of light.

I resolved to make a systematic examination of the place at once, and dispel the fanciful suggestions of its obscurity before they obtained a hold upon me. After satisfying myself of the fastening of the door, I began to walk about the room, peering round each article of furniture, tucking up the valances of the bed, and opening its curtains wide. I pulled up the blinds and examined the fastenings of the several windows before closing the shutters, leant forward and looked up the blackness of the wide chimney, and tapped the dark oak panelling for any secret opening.

There were two big mirrors in the room, each with a pair of sconces bearing candles, and on the mantelshelf, too, were more candles in china candlesticks. All these I lit one after the other. The fire was laid, an unexpected consideration from the old housekeeper—and I lit it, to keep down any disposition to shiver, and when it was burning well, I stood round with my back to it and regarded the room again. I had pulled up a chintz-covered armchair and a table, to form a kind of barricade before me, and on this lay my revolver ready to hand.

My precise examination had done me good, but I still found the remoter darkness of the place, and its perfect stillness, too stimulating for the imagination. The echoing of the stir and crackling of the

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fire was no sort of comfort to me. The shadow in the alcove at the end in particular, had that indefinable quality of a presence, that odd suggestion of a lurking, living thing, that comes so easily in silence and solitude. At last, to reassure myself, I walked with a candle into it, and satisfied myself that there was nothing tangible there. I stood that candle upon the floor of the alcove, and left it in that position.

By this time I was in a state of considerable nervous tension, although to my reason there was no adequate cause for the condition. My mind, however, was perfectly clear. I postulated quite unreservedly that nothing supernatural could happen, and to pass the time I began to string some rhymes together, Ingoldsby fashion, of the original legend of the place. A few I spoke aloud, but the echoes were not pleasant. For the same reason I also abandoned, after a time, a conversation with myself upon the impossibility of ghosts and haunting.

My mind reverted to the three old and distorted people downstairs, and I tried to keep it upon that topic. The sombre reds and blacks of the room troubled me; even with seven candles the place was merely dim. The one in the alcove flared in a draught, and the fire-flickering kept the shadows and penumbra perpetually shifting and stirring.

Casting about for a remedy, I recalled the candles I had seen in the passage, and, with a slight effort, walked out into the moonlight, carrying a candle and leaving the door open, and presently returned with as many as ten. These I put in various knick-knacks of china with which the room was sparsely adorned, lit and placed where the shadows had lain deepest, some on the floor, some in the window recesses, until at last my seventeen candles were so arranged that there was not an inch of the room that had not the direct light of at least one of them.

It occurred to me that when the ghost came, I could warn him not to trip over them. The room was now quite brightly illuminated. There was something very cheery and reassuring in these little streaming flames, and snuffing them gave me an occupation, and afforded a helpful sense of the passage of time.

Even with that, however, the brooding expectation of the vigil weighed heavily upon me. It was after midnight that the candle in the alcove suddenly went out, and the black shadow sprang back to its place there. I did not see the candle go out; I simply turned and saw that the darkness was there, as one might start and see the unexpected presence of a stranger. "By jove!" I said aloud; "that draught's a strong one!" and, taking the matches from the table, I walked across the room in a leisurely manner, to re-light the corner again. My first match would not strike, and as

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I succeeded with the second, something seemed to blink on the wall before me. I turned my head involuntarily, and saw that the two candles on the little table by the fireplace were extinguished. I rose at once to my feet.

"Odd!" I said. "Did I do that myself in a flash of absent-mindedness?"

I walked back, re-lit one, and, as I did so, I saw the candle in the right sconce of one of the mirrors wink and go right out, and almost immediately its companion followed it. There was no mistake about it. The flame vanished, as if the wicks had been suddenly nipped between a finger and a thumb, leaving the wick neither glowing nor smoking, but black. While I stood gaping, the candle at the foot of the bed went out, and the shadows seemed to take another step towards me.

"This won't do!" said I, and first one and then another candle on the mantelshelf followed.

"What's up?" I cried, with a queer high note getting into my voice somehow. At that the candle on the wardrobe went out, and the one I had re-lit in the alcove followed.

"Steady on!" I said. "These candles are wanted," speaking with a half-hysterical facetiousness, and scratching away at a match the while for the mantel candlesticks. My hands trembled so much that twice I missed the rough paper of the matchbox. As the mantel emerged from darkness again, two candles in the remoter end of the window were eclipsed. But with the same match I also re-lit the larger mirror candles, and those on the floor near the doorway, so that for the moment I seemed to gain on the extinctions. But then in a volley there vanished four lights at once in different corners of the room, and I struck another match in quivering haste, and stood hesitating whither to take it.

As I stood undecided, an invisible hand seemed to sweep out the candles on the table. With a cry of terror, I dashed at the alcove, then into the corner, and then into the window, relighting three, as two more vanished by the fireplace; then, perceiving a better way, I dropped the matches on the iron-bound deed-box in the corner, and caught up the bedroom candlestick. With this I avoided the delay of striking matches; but for all that the steady process of extinction went on, and the shadows I feared and fought against returned, and crept in upon me, first a step gained on this side of me and then on that. It was like a ragged storm-cloud sweeping out the stars. Now and then one returned for a minute, and was lost again. I was now almost frantic with the horror of the coming darkness, and my self-possession deserted me. I leaped panting and dishevelled from candle to candle, in a vain struggle against that remorseless advance.

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I bruised myself on the thigh against the table, I sent a chair headlong, I stumbled and fell and whisked the cloth from the table in my fall. My candle rolled away from me, and I snatched another as I rose. Abruptly this was blown out, as I swung it off the table by the wind of my sudden movement, and immediately the two remaining candles followed. But there was light still in the room, a red light that staved off the shadows from me. The fire! Of course, I could still thrust my candle between the bars and re-light it!

I turned to where the flames were still dancing between the glowing coals, and splashing red reflections upon the furniture, made two steps towards the grate, and incontinently the flames dwindled and vanished, the glow vanished, the reflections rushed together and vanished, and as I thrust the candle between the bars darkness closed upon me like the shutting of an eye, wrapped about me in a stifling embrace, sealed my vision, and crushed the last vestiges of reason from my brain. The candle fell from my hand. I flung out my arms in a vain effort to thrust that ponderous blackness away from me, and, lifting up my voice, screamed with all my might—once, twice, thrice. Then I think I must have staggered to my feet. I know I thought suddenly of the moonlit corridor, and, with my head bowed and my arms over my face, made a run for the door.

But I had forgotten the exact position of the door, and struck myself heavily against the corner of the bed. I staggered back, turned, and was either struck or struck myself against some other bulky furniture. I have a vague memory of battering myself thus, to and fro in the darkness, of a cramped struggle, and of my own wild crying as I darted to and fro, of a heavy blow at last upon my forehead, a horrible sensation of falling that lasted an age, of my last frantic effort to keep my footing, and then I remember no more.

I opened my eyes in daylight. My head was roughly bandaged and the man with the withered arm was watching my face. I looked about me, trying to remember what had happened, and for a space I could not recollect. I rolled my eyes into the corner, and saw the old woman, no longer abstracted, pouring out some drops of medicine from a little blue phial into a glass.

"Where am I?" I asked; "I seem to remember you, and yet I cannot remember who you are."

They told me then, and I heard of the haunted red room as one who hears a tale. "We found you at dawn," said he, "and there was blood on your forehead and lips."

It was very slowly I recovered my memory of my experience. "You believe now," said the old man, "that the room is haunted?"

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He spoke no longer as one who greets an intruder, but as one who grieves for a broken friend.

"Yes," said I; "the room is haunted."

"And you have seen it. And we, who have lived here all our lives, have never set eyes upon it. Because we have never dared. . . . Tell us, is it truly the old earl who—"

"No," said I; "it is not."

"I told you so," said the old lady, with the glass in her hand. "It is his poor young countess who was frightened—"

"It is not," I said. "There is neither ghost of earl nor ghost of countess in that room, there is no ghost there at all; but worse, far worse—"

"Well?" they said.

"The worst of all the things that haunt poor mortal man," said I; "and that is, in all its nakedness—*Fear!* Fear that will not have light nor sound, that will not bear with reason, that deafens and darkens and overwhelms. It followed me through the corridor, it fought against me in the room—"

I stopped abruptly. There was an interval of silence. My hand went up to my bandages.

Then the man with the shade sighed and spoke. "That is it," said he. "I knew that was it. A power of darkness. To put such a curse upon a woman! It lurks there always. You can feel it even in the daytime, even of a bright summer's day, in the hangings, in the curtains keeping behind you however you face about. In the dusk it creeps along the corridor and follows you, so that you dare not turn. There is Fear in that room of hers—black Fear, and there will be—so long as this house of sin endures."

* * *

OFF DUTY

The rule that there must never be an indecent suggestion in a well-known American magazine was broken when one of its serials began its run. The end of the first instalment found the secretary-heroine having a drink with her boss at his home, the boss's wife away and night drawing on. To the profound shock of numerous readers, the second instalment began with the two having breakfast. The Editor prepared a stock letter to answer the indignant mail. "The magazine," he said, "cannot be responsible for what the characters in its serials do between instalments."

Told by JOHN TEBBEL

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ADOPTION BY GRACE

"Some day," Maria said, "he will have to learn it. But not yet"

by PHYLLIS BOTTOME

THERE was a magic about the whole Island; but you did not know what the magic really was until you came to a part of the Island where no one ever looked for it.

The roads were too bad; the people too poor; and the mosquitoes bit. There were none of the things which even magic-seekers expect to find in the background—shops, telephones, doctors—traps, or if you prefer to call them facilities, for spending money.

Men with donkeys sometimes came round with fresh vegetables. Three times a week a cart passed selling bread; and day and night the boats went out to fish. For the rest, time filled itself on Treasure Beach with the swift and secret missions of birds in almond trees and hibiscus bushes. Humming-birds shone like jewels and whirred like electric fans. Canaries with orange heads outflamed the sunshine, while at dawn and twilight, Savannah blackbirds sharpened their hearts against their beaks, so that you could guess how sad their long sunny days had been flying over the desolate Savannah marshes.

At dawn it seemed as if the whole beach trembled with the swift movements of crabs; dry and feathery they blew across the sand, the thickness of tissue paper and the exact colour of the sand itself. They had four claws on each papery side to scuttle with, and two little blue shovels under their invisible mouths. They held their black pin-point eyes in front of them, prepared at the first movement of any living thing to toss themselves into the nearest wave. They had enemies in the sea as well as on land, but, like most other creatures, the crabs preferred the Devil they knew to the Devil they didn't know.

Boats are the life of Treasure Beach; and the best boats on the Island are made there. The men of Treasure Beach choose a suitable moment, when the sea is a boundless pool of smooth azure, then they walk far inland to find a silk cotton tree. Perhaps they buy it when they find it, or perhaps at some silent hour of

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early dawn they just "find" it—unprotected by that distant wall of money which separates Treasure Beach from the rest of the world—and cut it down.

The silk cotton tree is older than the ages, with roots that know every trick of how to go on living without water and against the force of hurricanes. They often grow their roots outside of themselves to catch the moisture in the air, and to act as walls defending a beleaguered city. Assaulted, unprotected, yet always surviving, the silk cotton tree never gives up its long glory, till man outwits its splendid strength. When the tree has fallen, the men drag it to the Black River's edge, and there it must be roughly hollowed out; and then they can paddle it down the river on to the open sea, and round the coast till they reach their own beach in safety. Men, tree, ocean, and the wind in the sky, all these things must act in harmony, before a new boat can be born at Treasure Beach, under the shade of the almond trees.

Though most of the Treasure Beach people possess enough land to graze donkeys and to plant yams, yet no man can count on water in the long summer drought, except the ceaseless sea. Fish are sold as well as eaten, and when there is very little fish in the catch little comes back into the fishermen's pockets. The nets cannot be mended, nor the children eat bread. Sometimes, when there is a great catch, still less comes back, because the merchants, who carry the fish away in trucks to the nearest market, declare that unaccountably the whole Island is teeming with fish at the same moment, and so there is too much fish for the public demand. But there never seems to be too little money in the pockets of the merchants.

There is so little money to be had at any time in Treasure Beach, that everyone for miles around is perfectly honest. All the doors and windows can be left open day and night and every man's goat roams securely where it will. Everyone on the coast knows that God *must* be interested in them, because no one else is. Plymouth Brethren are a prevailing sect, and they know more about God than most thereabouts, and the best among all the Plymouth Brethren, and the most thoroughly at home with God, was Ebenezer Elliot. Ebenezer was hardly coloured at all. He had had a Scottish grandfather and had inherited his steady grey eyes. He looked forty, although he was sixty-five.

Ebenezer had built his own house out of well-seasoned wood when he was a young man. He had chosen his wood well and his wife better, and had put into the building of their lives together the same skill and the same devotion.

Ebenezer was not only good; he was also extremely wise, and

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everyone in the neighbourhood of Treasure Beach came to him with their problems and their difficulties. They even brought him their sins, for although they were honest people, yet they were men and women, and the days were long and the nights short, so that you never knew quite what would happen. Ebenezer, though he dealt faithfully with sinners, and told them exactly what God thought of them and what measures He would be likely to take to eradicate their sins, never told the Police.

The Police had a good house three miles away from Treasure Beach, on the hillside, and were popular since they only arrested strangers. Still, everyone knew what their profession was, and did not wish their disagreeable duties to be brought home to them.

Ebenezer and Maria had had five children, three sons and two daughters, whom they had actually managed to get educated and, with a great deal of effort and many personal sacrifices, out into the world.

One son was in the Customs' Office at Kingston; one taught in a school on the north side of the Island, where it always rained; and one, incredibly, had crossed the sea and now lived in mystic glory in a kingdom called "California," where the skies rain gold. The daughters were both well married to prosperous tradesmen on the Ridge where they had been in service; and no one played in Ebenezer's cove now except the goats. The reef, the cove, the rocks on which the goats bounded, the land on which his house and his boat stood, all belonged to Ebenezer.

Ebenezer's house was as spotless and clean as a sea-washed shell. It was so quiet that Maria had almost ceased to hear, however intently she listened, the echo of her children's voices.

She knew that it was wonderful to have sons and daughters so successful that she was unlikely ever to see them again; but she sometimes thought that she would have preferred one failure nearer home. However, Maria kept this thought to herself, for it was her conviction that thoughts belonged to men, and that women, if they had them, had better leave them unspoken.

Women on Treasure Beach had very little time to think, even if they had anything to think about. They had to clean their homes without soap, and with only brackish water. They had to cook with almost nothing to cook; and goats and chickens, though agreeable as property, involved a considerable amount of time and activity on Maria's part.

Maria never gave advice to her neighbours, though she listened to all they told Ebenezer, and to all that Ebenezer told them in order to solve their problems.

Behind the front room, in which Ebenezer and the visitor sat, was a little back room facing the sea, which held Maria and all

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her cooking utensils—except her cooking pot, which was outside on the beach.

The front room was the pride of Maria's heart, for there were three chairs in it, a sofa, a small table with photographs of all five children, two framed texts on the walls, and two giant shells with bright pink insides, found by her children on their own reef.

When everything was all over and the visitor got up to go, Maria would come in and shake the neighbour's hand in both her own, her eyes full of love and pity. Sometimes Maria would say a parting word which no one would pay much attention to at the time, perhaps a bare statement of a fact that had been overlooked and which the visitor might suddenly remember and act upon afterwards, adopting it as a happy thought of his own.

One day a neighbour's girl called Elvira Watson ran round the point into their cove screaming and crying as if an alligator were after her.

It looked from Ebenezer's porch as if Elvira were going to run straight across the reef and plunge into the sea. A storm was coming up and the waves were high, but they could hear Elvira screaming above the sound of the waves and the wind. Ebenezer who was as sure-footed as the goats, quickly rushed after her across the rocks and caught her just before the waves did. A minute later and Elvira would have been dashed to pieces against the rocks.

"Let me go! Let me go!" shrieked Elvira. "I want to drown! I want to drown both of us!"

"Hell fire is what you would get!" Ebenezer shouted in her ear. "Once the waves were done with you!" and this seemed to quiet Elvira, for she let him drag her back, though unwilling, into the house. Elvira was soaking wet with waves and tears, but Ebenezer spread a mat over his best visitor's chair, and sat Elvira down in it, while Maria began to warm a little goat's milk for her, because she thought it would be wise to fill Elvira's stomach as well as to warm her heart.

"Now, Elvira," Ebenezer told her, "we are your friends. Tell us just what is your trouble, and even if it is a great sin we will help you, for we know what a trouble a great sin is, and if Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, be sure He left plenty behind Him for His children to save as well!" Elvira shook her head and sobbed. She had not quite made up her mind yet whether what she had to tell Ebenezer was a great sin or not. However, Adassah, her married sister, with whom Elvira lived, knew it was a great sin and had turned her out of the house because of it.

Elvira had already had one misfortune; a nice little girl Amy

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had turned out to be, and Adassah had allowed the child to live with them—though she had said that this must be the last of such errors. And now there was another one, but not the same father. A few weeks ago a stranger had come to the Well and had looked at Elvira when she came to draw water. Elvira had noticed the strange man looking at her, and turned her head away. He had a donkey and was unusually black. The next evening he was there again, and when he looked once more at Elvira she forgot to turn her head away.

There was nothing to be done about it. It happened as it had happened before. The stranger rode away on the donkey; and a month later Elvira knew. Adassah said that married people have to consider their own families. There were only two rooms in Adassah's house and it already held three grown people and four children, with one able-bodied man to fend for them all and to look after three acres of land.

Adassah certainly had, as usual, right on her side. She had never been deserted by strange men with donkeys. The ten commandments had always come her way. She had a voice like a corncrake and eyes like polished flint, but her children always obeyed her, and so did Amy, who never thought of obeying Elvira. Adassah's chickens laid eggs where she expected them to lay eggs; no goat of hers ever got lost. If she went out on the rocks to look for a lobster in their pot, there would be a lobster; and Adassah had been known to sell her lobsters for a shilling apiece, when no one else on the Beach got more than ninepence for theirs.

Ebenezer, with his hands on his knees and his steady eyes fixed on Elvira's face, listened to her with sympathy. Although he was forced to disapprove of Elvira's weak carelessness, and to approve the proud rigidity of Adassah, yet he could never get over a feeling of secret hostility to Adassah. She was, if such a thing could be, too much in the right. She was almost as much in the right as Ebenezer himself.

When Elvira had drunk a little warm goat's milk with rum in it, and felt better, she was able to explain the cruellest part of her whole story. Only last Sunday she had seen Chocolate Bill, a man they all knew and respected, from Great Bay. He had his own boat and his mother had just died and left him her hut with a field attached to it. Ebenezer would remember 'Chocolate Bill.' It was true that he was a trifle darker than anyone on Treasure Beach, or along their part of the coast where, on account of the frequent visits of an English pilot years ago, they were all practically white. Chocolate Bill had actually proposed to marry Elvira, and had agreed to adopt Amy, who was seven years old, and, as Chocolate Bill remarked, could be a nice help to both of them, but he had

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been firm, as firm as Adassah herself, about nothing else being expected of him.

"If there is to be a baby," he had explained to Elvira, "it must always be mine. A helpless mouth I won't fill unless I myself have put it there." Elvira confessed that when you came to think of it, Chocolate Bill was only reasonable.

"The trouble is, Elvira," Ebenezer told her, "that you have never learned to say 'No,' and that your sister Adassah has never learned to say 'Yes.' It is a pity your parents could not have mixed you up a little more when you were babies. But jumping off rocks into a boiling sea is to no purpose. We must think of a better plan for this new soul who, after all, has his rights, and may have his uses. Indeed, I have already thought of such a plan. Maria and I, as you know, have had five children. All are out in the world today, and all are doing well; none of them have need of us or are at all likely to return. We are alone in our own cove with our own goats and chickens. We also possess two milk cows, who run with the herd. There will always be enough under this roof to feed an extra mouth. You must sign a paper to promise that the child is to be wholly ours. We, on our part, will undertake to bring this child up, boy or girl, in a God-fearing manner.

"He will bear our name," went on Ebenezer, who had already made up his mind to ask God for a boy, "and when he is sixteen he will be put to work and our responsibility ends."

Elvira promised willingly, for she knew that Chocolate Bill would have nothing further to do with her till the child was born and disposed of—one way or another.

She still had her anxieties, for how was she to know that Chocolate Bill would be even approximately faithful to her over such a long period? Still, it would be an incentive to him to know that suitable arrangements were already made.

Adassah, when she heard of Ebenezer's offer, was as full of bitterness as a monkey is of fleas. She refused to believe in the strength of Chocolate Bill's intentions. She disregarded or minimized the splendid prospects of the adoption. The Elliots were old, they might die, they might change their minds; all Adassah could believe in was the supineness of Elvira in the face of any temptation and the power of her own tongue to lash her out of it.

Elvira had now to endure the worst nine months of all her heavy, hardworking existence. She was balanced on a tight rope between two precipices. She might lose Bill—she might *not* lose her baby. Perhaps, after all, Adassah would again prove right, and, when it came to the point, Ebenezer would refuse to take a helpless child. Perhaps he had only made this offer to prevent

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Elvira from drowning off his rocks, and so bringing a curse on the cove that a Duppy might well feel called upon to fulfil, when it came to the next hurricane.

However, all that Elvira dared not anticipate, happened. Chocolate Bill married no one else in the interval, and *was* prepared to marry Elvira at the end of it. Ebenezer and Maria willingly kept their promise, but instead of being relieved, and even ravished by all this unearned good fortune, Elvira found herself more unhappy than ever, for she had not counted upon her own mad desire to keep this male, black, healthy, superfluous, wonderful baby. He was not a "red" baby with sea-grey Scottish eyes; he was purple-black like the velvety shadows on a summer's night. His long-lashed eyes beamed into hers with that divine, dynamic good temper, born of sun and darkness, and that irresponsibility which had been the chief quality of his nameless father.

He was the most bouncing, alert, and responsively perfect baby that any mother ever possessed. When he cried it was a menacing roar; when he smiled—and he almost always smiled—Elvira's whole heart rose to smile with him. Even Adassah grudgingly admitted that for a child of Sin, he *was* an unusually fine specimen.

After endless consultation, and at Ebenezer's wish, with constant reference to the Bible, Elvira decided to call the child 'Adam.' No one else approved of this selection, but Elvira took one of her mulish turns over it. She would call him nothing else but 'Adam,' though Adassah told her it was as good as bringing a serpent into the family. Adam, his mother thought to herself, was the first of men, and he was turned out of Paradise. To any baby, *his* mother's breast is Paradise, and Ebenezer and Maria—although angels—held flaming swords, and were prepared to use them in order to keep Elvira away from Adam.

Two months after Adam was born, Elvira gave up her baby, married Chocolate Bill, and went to live at Great Bay, which was too far away from Treasure Beach for Elvira even to dream of seeing her lost child again. Still it was not quite out of reach of Adassah's tongue; she could send messages, warnings, rebukes, and protests through travelling men with donkeys, who from time to time bridged the coast between them.

Maria took Adam, stark naked and without possessions, and succeeded in teaching him, as she had succeeded in teaching many motherless kids, how to suck the milk off her finger, and then to draw it through a rubber tube that looked like a finger. Adam was not even fretful about it. There was milk, and he could suck while arms of exceptional skill and tenderness held him. He was

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firm all over his velvety body and without blemish, as if indeed he had been born on the first day of creation.

Adam was kept by Maria, happier, cleaner, and healthier than any baby on the coast. Instead of bitter tea and yams with salt fish, he was fed on milk and eggs. He kicked, laughed, crowed, and played authoritatively with sunbeams. In a few months Adam was crawling all over the soft white sand, and one day hurling himself on something papery that fluttered in front of his eyes, he had his first experience with a crab.

It was a bitter experience for Adam, but by a happy accident his agony was brief, for he rolled over on to the crab, which relaxed the grip of its claws in death, even before Maria reached them. After this Adam distrusted the sand unless it kept still for a long time.

When he was only eight months old, Adam could stand firmly on his feet, and when he was only a year, he could get as far as the first ripple in the cove, and sitting down in it, he shrieked with rapture. Adam had two worlds to live in now, the earth and the sea, and he lived indiscriminately in both of them. He only wore clothes on Sunday. The rest of the time it looked as if Eve had spared him a fragment of her fig leaf.

Throughout his babyhood, Maria was Adam's whole world, but she withdrew a little into a beneficial background when Adam began to discern the enormous importance of Ebenezer. Maria had never said 'No' to Adam. When he got into trouble, she either removed the trouble, or she removed Adam; but now he went beyond the reach of Maria's ears, or the sound of her voice. Her old legs could not move as quickly as her ageless heart. It was when Adam climbed the rocks, fell into pools, or had arguments with implacable goats, that he discovered the importance of Ebenezer. Ebenezer's was the hand that removed stinging jelly fish, and drew out sea-eggs' cruel prickles. Ebenezer did say 'NO' on occasions and with finality; and Adam's heart accepted his bleak authority. Ebenezer punished very rarely; Maria never.

Adam got into mischief quite frequently, but he usually managed to get out of it by himself. The goats taught him a good deal, and often provided the mischief; then there was always the sea, and the sea taught Adam what the goats didn't.

Once Adam, while shell hunting, was nearly drowned by the sea. He had ventured out beyond the rocks which Ebenezer had set as a barrier, beyond which Adam was never to go. A playful wave pulled him out a little further and then a little further till Adam found he couldn't get back. The sea got into his eyes, nose, and ears, and down his throat in the most unfriendly manner. But before it quite succeeded in choking him, Adam gave a loud

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shriek, and instantly Ebenezer leapt across the rocks, into the sea, and just as Adam sank into blotting, choking darkness, he felt his round black head pulled up into pure light and free air, and Ebenezer's stern but reassuring eyes were looking down at him.

Ebenezer held Adam upside down and shook the water out of him, then he took him in his arms and sat down on the nearest rock with Adam on his knees. He waited till Adam had rubbed all the salt water out of his eyes, and the breath had come safely back into his shocked lungs, then he said: "Adam, the sea is too strong for you. When you are older I shall teach you to swim, but until you can swim you must never go beyond the reef. I shall not punish you for going out too far today, because the sea has punished you enough already. But if you do not do what I tell you, you will come to harm. Remember also, Adam, even when I am not there, to look where you are going and do not go there unless you know you can get back." Then Ebenezer kissed Adam and took him to Maria, who gave him a honey cake, and Adam soon forgot how seriously his old comrade the sea had punished him.

As soon as Adam was four years old, Ebenezer taught him how to swim, how to float on his back, and how to catch fish in nets. Adam was almost a man by the time he was five. He had learned all about boats, and even how to make them, for Ebenezer showed him how, and Maria gave him rags for sails, and Adam's boats were better than any other toys in the world.

All day long Adam played and moved side by side with Ebenezer on the rocks or the sea, or sometimes in their field-land, where the crops tried hard to grow against the hot sun, and to keep whatever moisture they could draw out of the dry, harsh earth. Adam learned to carry on the top of his round head a bucket of brackish water from the well kept clean by a live turtle. He put a few almond leaves on the top of the water, and looking straight in front of him he followed his toes till he reached his own porch, with not one precious drop spilled out of the bucket.

Adam never got typhoid; mosquitoes did not give him malaria: even his teeth came through without more trouble than he could very well bear. Other children sometimes came to play with him, but he did not learn much harm from them, because they played under Ebenezer's eyes, and knew better than to try anything harmful in his vicinity.

But Adam liked best of all to be alone with Ebenezer, learning about boats and all the ways of fish. He enjoyed Ebenezer's Bible stories, too, for they were full of movement and passion, and Ebenezer told them very well.

Adam never talked much to Maria, or even thought about her;

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but he knew she was there, and if she was there then everything would be all right. When Maria screwed up her eyes and smiled at Adam, he knew exactly what she meant, and smiled back. Maria had never done anything but smile at Adam, and it had no more occurred to Adam that he wasn't Maria's child than that the light didn't come out of the sky. There is no need to question what is always there and always pleasant.

Then one day when Adam was seven years old and could catch and land all but the largest fish, and manage the boat by himself, short of a gale, Ebenezer told him that now he must go to school.

"But I already know everything!" Adam said, looking up at the sky where the sun was setting, and out towards the sea where the tiniest loop of a new moon sparkled like ice against the violet air. "I know where to find the Pole star, and what Jesus said to His friends! I can say the Lord's Prayer by heart; I can make a fire and put it out; and I know how to get a lobster out of a pot—and that is hardest of all."

"Yes, you know all these things very well indeed," Ebenezer admitted.

"But how could I tell you the words Jesus said to His friends or teach you the Lord's Prayer, if I couldn't read? Besides, there are other things to learn. Jamaica is a large and important island, but it isn't the whole world. You have to learn what happens in other countries, and how to read books. Also how to count money. For when you are a man you will have to earn your living like I did myself. You must know what you ought to ask for your work and how to live on it. The money you earn need not all be spent either—and for that you must calculate. I saved and your mother saved money every week when we were young, and with this money I sent my big sons and daughters out into the world; and I also bought more land, and this cove and the boat which catches our fish."

"But they went away from here—my big brothers and sisters," Adam said, "they went away from *you!* Such things I do not wish to learn. I am your son—and here I will remain."

Ebenezer gave a strange, long sigh. "You must go to school," he said gently, "to learn what it is you *really* wish—for, without learning, a man's wishes are too small for him."

That night, when Adam was fast asleep in his own tiny room, almost like a shell, it was so close to the unending whisper of the sea, Ebenezer said to Maria, "Ought we to tell him ourselves Maria, before he starts his life at school, where he is sure to learn it—that he is *not* our child?"

Maria was silent for a moment. She was listening not only

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to Ebenezer but to the sea. Always it seemed to be saying to Maria, "Hush—hush Maria! Hush—hush!" and Maria agreed with the sea, and said nothing.

"We have come to love this child," Ebenezer told her after a pause, "as if he were our own. That he is Elvira's child makes no difference; that he is not even born in wedlock makes no difference. That he is a dark and not a fair child as all our own children were, makes less than no difference! To me, it is as if I loved him *more* than my other children—he came to us like Benjamin. Now we are old and wise, and the blood in our hearts is growing cold, he is our warmth and our blessing! I should like to think he would close our eyes when we come to die, and live here after us." Maria's eyes shone back into her husband's with the same light, and he knew that she felt as he felt. "We have told him nothing," Ebenezer continued after a pause, "and by accident he has learned nothing, but now he will go to school where those sour-mouthed Adassah's children also go, and he will surely learn from them that he is not our child!"

"Some day, it is true, he will have to learn it," Maria murmured, "but, Ebenezer, if we ourselves tell him just as he is going out into the world, it might sound as if we were driving him from our hearts! To go to school—that is already a harsh and unknown place for him. He leaves for the first time our home together, the cove and the sea. But he goes knowing that in a few hours he will come back and find everything the same. Let him feel himself a part of us as long as he can—until he gets used to the school!" The sea kept saying, "Hush! Hush! Hush—hush!" as if it were sure that Maria was right.

Ebenezer gave a troubled sigh; and the next morning he himself walked the two miles to the school with Adam, and as they walked side by side together up the long, red-earth road, Ebenezer said to him, "You will find many strange children from all over the district at this school. All strange children are not good; some have dirty habits. They have not been told what Jesus said. Perhaps, too, you are better clothed than they are, and better fed—and they will hate you for this, though this is not your fault—or theirs! If these children try to fight with you, do not be afraid, you should hit back and hit hard! As long as you are not afraid and do what is right—pain does not matter much. They will not really hurt you because of the teacher. Remember to double up your fist like this when you fight, but do not begin to fight. Be pleasant and have no quarrel with any boy or girl unless they make one. Obey your teacher, and when you do not understand what she says, ask questions. It is your right; as to your body, it belongs to God and to you; it does not belong to anyone else.

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Now goodbye, my son." And Ebenezer patted Adam on the shoulder, and Adam swallowed something hard that had got into his throat without his putting it there, and reminded himself that Ebenezer had also once been to school and was none the worse for it.

The school was the biggest house Adam had even seen, and he had not thought there were so many children in the world as he saw there. Almost all of them were lighter than he was. A grown lady sat on a platform at a desk above the children, and a younger lady walked to and fro in front of the little ones.

Adam didn't enjoy his first day at school. He had never been indoors so long at a time before, and hardly ever sat on anything harder than sand. Still, he stood up when the other children stood up, and sat on his bench when the others sat, and the young teacher told him what to do with a pencil and a slate. He could rub it out afterwards if it was wrong, and try again. She was a nice young teacher, and she seemed to know at once that Adam was a nice boy; and Adam thought school might have been worse.

After a long time, the young teacher took the little ones out into the yard, under a big tree, and taught them there. One of the boys who stood next to Adam pinched him hard, and when Adam pinched back, the boy cried out and said, "Please, teacher, the new boy pinched me!"

The young teacher looked at them both for a moment, and then she said in a stern voice, "Nobody must pinch anybody"; and, perhaps, that was the best thing she could have said. Adam had pinched the boy so hard who had pinched him, that nothing further happened.

When lessons were over, all the other children began running all over the yard, as if they were escaped mercury. The boy who was one of Adassah's sons, ran after Adam, pointing at him and shouting, "Hi, look at the new black boy! He hasn't got a father. He hasn't got a mother! Hi ya, Adam, you aren't nobody's kin, no more'n a beach crab." Adam knew that beach crabs have no families, they live in holes in the sand made by themselves, and if they see another crab they fight it. All the children ran around Adam shouting, "Beach crab, beach crab, he ain't got no father! He ain't got no mother—beach crab!"

Adam could not fight them all, so he decided to run away. He ran like a swift, diving into the air, through the gate and down the road, further and further, all of the two miles home, and flung himself into Ebenezer's arms, his heart pumping fit to burst, and crying, "Oh Daddy, Daddy, am I a beach crab?"

Ebenezer's black eyebrows came right down over his steady,

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blazing, Scottish eyes, and he would have liked to give Adassah's children the hiding of their lives, but the road was empty.

"You are no beach crab," he said consolingly, when Adam had sobbed out the full story of his first day at school. "But Maria and I, we are old, our children are grown, and we took you from your mother who is a good woman, but wanted to marry a man who wished children of his own. Now no good woman, like your mother Elvira, is a beach crab. She got married in church, and she is quite as respectable as your Aunt Adassah is, whose brat told you the tale. God made us all, Adam—black, red, yellow, and white—according to the land that's our home, and the sun that shines on it. We suit our country and our country suits us—and we're all God's children just the same. It's the colour of our hearts that matters, not our skins. If your heart is black with sin, then you're the Devil's child, though your skin is so white you might think it was a coconut! But if your heart is white, you belong to God and only to God. Now your mother Elvira, she has a much nicer heart than her sister Adassah, though she did have you by a kind of accident as you might say, and so she gave you to us, before Chocolate Bill set out to marry her. So now you do belong to us, just as if you were born ours. Your name is Adam Elliot, and you ain't no beach crab, unless you behave as such."

Adam stopped crying; he listened all over his fine, healthy, purple-black body. He listened with his ears, his eyes, and his heart. His very breath checked to listen. Ebenezer had said all he could, perhaps he had said too much, for Adam couldn't take all of it in. His heart still felt like a stone dropped into him by mistake. How could a mother be good who left him? And who was Chocolate Bill?

Adam got off Ebenezer's knee, slipping to the ground. He ran around the little white cottage till he found Maria, who was laying out her washing on the flattest and sunniest of rocks.

Adam leapt across the rocks; he cut his foot till the blood ran, against a sharp piece of coral, but he never noticed it; he hurled himself against Maria's old and withered breast. Maria asked no questions, nor did she tell him to whom he belonged. She simply gathered him up against her heart and, wrinkling up her face, she looked down at him and smiled.

* * *

When fortune comes seize her with a firm hand—in front,
I counsel you, for behind she is bald.

LEONARDO DA VINCI, Note Books

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JULY

CUCCU, Cuccu!
July is come
And doth pursu
Curriculum;
Glass falleth tu
Nu minimum,
While hailstones du
On greenhouse drum.
Cuccu, cuccu, cuccu!

Cuccu, Cuccu!
July is come,
Flood poureth thru
Front door, by gum,
But plumber whu
Arrives tu plumb
Departeth tu
Consult his chum,
Cuccu, cuccu, cuccu!

Cuccu, Cuccu!
July is come,
I have the flu
With delirium,
So I will bru
A bru of rum—
The only tru
Solatium.
Cuccu, cuccu, cuccu!

Cuccu, Cuccu!
July is come,
And, *entre nu*,
The seventh rum
Hath mounted tu
My cranium
And makes my vu
Tu frolicsome
Cuccu, hiccu, cuccu,
Hiccu, cuccu! Adu!

JUSTIN RICHARDSON

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★NEIL PATERSON, versatile author of *The China Run*, contributes this brilliant and entertaining new story to Argosy—

THE YEAR OF THE SPIDER

THE YEAR of the Spider was notable throughout Spain and is not to be forgotten. It is especially memorable to me on account of a matter of sex. I was fifteen years old at the time and a woman, but, to be truthful, my dimensions were not satisfactory. I was 20 hips, 16 waist, and 19 bosom. I was 59 inches high and weighed 81 pounds. I was considered immaterial.

Carlota Nunez was married when she was fourteen and Ana Garcias and Maria Muro each had a baby and Theresa Gomez had one incorporated, and all normal girls of my age were into corsetry and had black skirts and cheeks like jelly, and Mepita Ruiz had had knives out for her and one man in prison and one in hospital, both men adult and fully grown. Yet I had achieved neither the eye nor the whistle, and could walk with confidence in the dark. It was a source of humiliation, although, to tell the truth, I hardly gave it a thought. I was far too intelligent.

"One estimates a woman by the number, not the size of her breasts," my aunt would say. My aunt too was thin. "That thou shouldst grow one grey hair in worry, for these inflated bladderskins of girls have no more than a cat and less than a rabbit, and thou, Francesca—thou hast education."

This was undeniable. I had an excessive education. I was fit to be a clerk almost, and in addition I was learning no less than the English language from Father Hermandez, the priest. My uncle, Tio Federico, was saving money to send me to machine school in Seville, and he had even negotiated the sale of his champion pigeon, The Young Devil, in order to go into business and be a capitalist, although he was not, he said, a man who enjoyed staining his fingers with trade.

He sat incessantly in the sun, his bandurria across his knees and his wineskin in the shade of his back. Sometimes he plucked a few notes from the body of the bandurria and sang a sequidilla, but mostly he just sat with his face hidden under his sombrero. If you woke him and enquired what he was doing he said he was considering a problem. He was a very fat and happy man.

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" Frasquita," he said, " Commerce is a matter for men with knives. Nevertheless, those who don't kill pigs must not expect black puddings. You are a good girl my dear, though unformed, and I am willing to make almost any sacrifice for you."

" You are very kind, uncle," I would say.

" Verily," my uncle said. " That is God's truth. I am a monster of kindness."

And so, for my sake, he had gone into the world of business, in partnership with Redhand, son of old Miguel Garcias and was now owner not only of our vines and two goats but joint owner in addition of twenty-three sheep. He had become, he said repeatedly, a man of substance. It was impossible to be angry with him. When he boasted like this he looked down modestly and winked with his moustachios. " I am of consequence," he said, " indisputably."

" You ! Bah, you are nothing but a lazy mountain of a man and a great fat fool," my aunt would say.

" A fool, unless he knows reading and writing, is never a great fool," my uncle argued.

" That thou shouldst boast of it ! " my aunt said. " Thine abysmal ignorance ! "

My aunt was a working woman. When I was small I was sometimes very sorry for her because she worked so hard, but my aunt was rarely sorry for herself and hardly ever angry with my uncle, even when he lay in the bed all day.

" It is his function," she explained.

I did not understand, but later I perceived that it was enough for my uncle to sit on his bottom and drink wine and sing songs and make jokes and laugh merrily. He put the joy into living, and this was all that was expected of him. One must not conclude, however, that my uncle was valueless. He carved many gadgets, including useful ones, with his knife, and in season he trod the vine. He was, moreover, a great musician, and even my aunt, who was not of an admitting nature, freely admitted this.

It was because of my uncle's music that the Year of the Spider was of such consequence to us. That year the Spider was everywhere. It was as big as my hand and twice as fierce. It stung like a hundred scorpions. When one was stung by the Spider one became very drowsy, and if one was not immediately aroused and kept awake one might become invalid and lie in a coma, like the dead, for several days on end.

All over Andalusia there was great demand for musicians and especially for Tio Federico (who was noted for the art of his finger) to play to those who had had the Spider and to exorcise their devils. This was regarded as a miracle by the ignorant country people,

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and by me also, until the Priest explained it to me. The Priest said it was simply a matter of physiology. By dancing one distributed the Spider's poison throughout the system and stimulated the bowels, and the bowels did the rest.

"It is like opium poisoning," the Priest said. "In the sophisticated hospitals they walk the patient about and slap him with towels and inflict pain upon him to prevent him from becoming comatose. That is the civilized procedure. In the country here where we are backward we have to make do with music, and the violence of our dances and the simplicity of our faith is such that the primitive music of a simple fellow like your uncle provides a more effective cure than all the expensive chicanery of modern medical science. Have I made myself quite clear, Francesca?"

"Sufficiently," I said. "I understand about the bowels at least."

"In that case," the Priest said, "let us conjugate the verb 'to sting' again."

The Priest was a venerable man. He was as old as the itch and wise as elephants, or so my uncle said. But for all that he treated me with dignity and sometimes with respect, as if I too were old and wise. That year I saw much of him, for in addition to giving me my English lessons twice weekly he also rehearsed us each Thursday in the play which we were to give, drawn through the streets on boards, at the fiesta of Corpus Christi.

These rehearsals were not a source of satisfaction to me, for certain of the village girls dressed with an unbecoming munificence and all save me wore stockings. With such equipment it is not to be marvelled that they distracted the attention of the boys, and on the conclusion of rehearsals when the boys clustered round all these elegant girls I would have been inclined to misery if the Priest had not invariably called me aside and spoken to me kindly, as to an equal adult.

He was always kind, although sometimes I think he was a little afraid of me. It is not displeasing to know that a man is afraid of you, even an old and educated man, like the Priest. I remember the first day I realised it. I remember that day very well because it was the day that Manuolo came with the news of La Rubia's sting. It was the day on which all our troubles commenced.

I saw young Manuolo from a long way off. He was climbing the hillside from the village and he was manifestly in a hurry, for he was coming directly up the hill, the steep way, and over the vines. I finished milking Theresa, the young goat, arranged my hair, smoothed my apron and walked to meet him. I did not think he had come to see me, but I hoped he had, and I saw no harm in asking.

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"Hullo Manuolo," I said. "Is it possible that you have come to see me, perchance?"

"It is not possible," Manuolo said, panting. "Consider the distance."

I walked by his side. "The distance is four kilometres," I said.

"Therefore naturally," Manuolo said, "I have not come to see you, little bony one. I have come on business. I have come for your uncle."

Manuolo was noted for his memory. It was his business to recite messages from this one to that one, and for this he was paid money. I knew that he had come to recite a message that yet another person had been stung by the Spider.

"Who now?" I asked, angry.

"La Rubia now," he said.

"*Madre mio!*" I did not know what to say. In our house it was not permitted to speak of La Rubia, the Blonde, for she was of ill-repute and had previously indulged my uncle in a misdemeanour. Accordingly my aunt and I hated her fiercely and my aunt had forbidden my uncle ever to see her again. My aunt had put the black curse on La Rubia, and it was therefore not to be wondered at that she had got the Spider.

When we went into the house my uncle was sitting in the wicker chair with his chin on the topmost wrinkle of his stomach and his eyes closed, thinking. My aunt was making paella for the supper. I poked my finger into the back of my uncle's neck and said, "Tio, here is the reciter."

"From the mother," Manuolo said, reciting, "and three female relatives of Louella, La Rubia, to Federico, Greatest of Spanish Artists. Here is the message. She has had the Spider and is poorly. Come in haste and with a divinity of music, and may God bless your family and all your organs."

"Eh, ah, La Rubia, you say?" my uncle said, embarrassed. And he blinked around the room, placing his bandurria and his shoes, and then he looked enquiringly at my aunt.

"So," my aunt said to Manuolo. "La Rubia. And on what part of the anatomy has she had the Spider?"

"The thigh."

"The back thigh?"

"No other," Manuolo said. "She is lying on her face and has a large swelling. Even if she escapes death she will have no easy sitting for many days. They say her face is turning purple."

My aunt tapped the ground with her foot and frowned.

"There would be little danger, auntie," I said, "from a woman with a purple face. Not to mention the Spider."

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" There is much wine," Manuolo said to my uncle.

My uncle nodded without glancing at him. He was anxiously watching my aunt and awaiting the sound of her voice. " Is it permitted ? " he asked at last.

" On one condition," my aunt said. " Francesca is going to the Priest. Afterwards she will call at the house of La Rubia and witness the musical ceremony. You will return in her company."

" I accept the condition," my uncle said. He put on his shoes, panting because of the bending, grabbed his bandurria, and bundled Manuolo and myself through the door. " You will not regret this, Maria," he said. " Rest assured that I shall act with great restraint and honour."

" Your wineskin," my aunt said, remembering.

" Unnecessary, woman."

" Francesca ! " my aunt called after me, and I knew from her voice precisely what she meant.

" I shall supervise him, auntie," I assured her. " You can depend upon it."

" I depend upon it," my aunt said.

" Tch, tch," my uncle said, now that my aunt could no longer hear. " Chatter ! Withdraw thy tongue into the cavity of thy mouth and let us have no more of this wordiness and excessive female chitter-chatter. There is need for velocity and all the wind in thy lungs. I remember well a pigeon of exquisite proportions who would assuredly have been the fastest bird in the world had it not been for his love of the coo. A vain, loquacious bird. I entered him the year of the drought for the Championship Andalusia . . ."

My uncle, having escaped from the house, was as merry as marriage bells, and, telling us repeatedly to save our breath, entertained us with accounts of his adventures all the way to the village. I directed occasional glances at Manuolo, but Manuolo did not return my glances, his eye flashed only for my uncle. I did not care. I was completely indifferent and I had a passionate desire to tell him so.

I did not wish to commence the English lesson for fear I missed the dancing of La Rubia, but I was too polite to say so. Instead, when the Priest opened the grammar on the table, I introduced a diversion. " Father," I said. " I have found something in my English book which I do not understand."

" What is it, my child ? "

" This," I said, pointing. " Explain it if you please."

" In hot climates," the Priest said, reading, " the young female tends to . . ."

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"Mature early," I said. "What does it mean, Father?"

"It is of no consequence," the Priest said. He picked up the book and looked at the inscription on the cover and clucked with his teeth.

"This is a hot climate," I said, "and I am a young female. Is it admitted?"

"Admitted," the Priest said.

"Then," I said, "it is clearly of consequence that I know this thing which I do early. I wish you to explain it if you please."

"I do not please."

"Then," I said, "I conclude it is a sexual matter."

The Priest sighed and closed the book. I attended gravely and it was then for the first time that I saw a certain movement in the Priest's eyes and realised to my great satisfaction that he was afraid of me. "Francesca," he said, "you are becoming a problem. I shall not be able to continue your lessons unless you cease to ask such questions."

"Then I shall cease to ask questions, Father."

"Alas, then you shall also cease to learn," the Priest said. "Come, we shall consult the grammar. You may ask as many questions as you like about the grammar."

"Frankly," I said, "I have no curiosity about the grammar. Did you know that La Rubia had had the spider in her back thigh?"

"I did not know the details."

"She has a large swelling and is turned purple," I told him. "My uncle has gone to rouse her with his music, and I am to go to the blonde's house on my aunt's account on the completion of our lesson and supervise my uncle in his behaviour."

"Your uncle's behaviour is good nowadays," the Priest said. "That has been noticeable."

"My uncle's behaviour has been exemplary," I said proudly. "Do you know, he has not been in the jail for two years!"

"I remember the year he married your aunt," the Priest said, smiling. "That was an apple off another tree. I remember . . . but come now, we have grammar to learn."

"Grammar is a dull affair," I said, "and at La Rubia's there will be singing and dancing and a great clatter of tongues. Strictly, it is my duty to be there."

The Priest closed the grammar.

"Very well," he said. "Even the pleasures of the grammar must wait on duty. But first, one Ave Maria in English. And it must be perfect."

I concluded the prayer. "That was perfect," I said.

"No," the Priest said, "it was exceedingly imperfect, but it will do. You can go now." He walked with me to the gate, and,

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being escorted, I walked with proper decorum although I would have preferred to run. "To mature," he said, "means to ripen, to age, to grow old."

"In hot countries," I said, staring at him, "the young female grows old quickly. Is that true, Father?"

"That is the translation, my child."

I just went on staring at him. I had feared it was something like that. "Father," I said. "Do you know how old I am?"

"Fourteen, is it not?"

"No, no," I said. "*Fifteen.*" And I walked away without another word. It was not until I reached the end of the lane that I realised I had not even said farewell. I looked round to wave, but the Priest had already gone indoors. His housekeeper's enormous red flannel petticoat was hanging on the line, mocking me and my maturity. I stared at it bitterly, and after a moment, perhaps because I was thinking of fat women inside petticoats, I remembered La Rubia. I began to run.

I had been to the outside of La Rubia's house several times, but I had never crossed the threshold. Inside, there was a scene of indescribable confusion. My uncle was sitting on a window ledge, his bandurria across his knees, his feet resting on a table amidst a great confusion of food. Round the table were the relatives and friends of La Rubia. They beat with their fists and eating tools on the table, rattled castanets, sang and laughed and drank from their wineskins. La Rubia's mother, smoking a cigarro, walked around them with a big olla of gazpacho soup in one hand and a plate of garlic teeth and red sausages in the other.

It was a scene of great festivity, enjoyed not only by those inside but also by those outside the house, of whom there were many, all singing and laughing and beating on their stomachs, while children in rags ran in and out the doorway, snatching scraps from the floor. I pushed through the multitude at the entrance and stood inside the room surveying the scene.

"Ah!" said La Rubia's mother, stupid woman, seizing me by the neck. "Caught thee, lousy one!"

"I am Francesca," I said.

"Thief's spawn!"

"I am the niece of my uncle Federico," I said angrily. "I am Francesca."

"Francesca," she said, examining me. "So thee is. Welcome, little Frasquita, and God grant thee many sons. Have a garlic?"

"No thank you," I said. "How is La Rubia?"

"Peaceful, praise it."

"I do not see her."

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"She is through the wall, in a deep slumber."

"Then the dancing is over?" I said, disappointed.

"All over," the mother said. She blew smoke in my face. "Ah what spice, what *salero*! You ought to have seen that dance, Maria."

"Francesca," I said. "It is Francesca is my name."

"It is all the same," the old woman said. "Arguments invariably lead to bad feeling, and there has been no bad feeling here tonight until you came. You must be a good girl and I shall tell you about La Rubia's dance. There has not been a spider ceremony to compare with it. Your uncle—prosper him, a good man, olé hey-hey—your uncle knows La Rubia intimately and immediately struck her secret key. Up, hoo, up—she was on her feet! Such grace! Such elegance! Such vehemence! Such passion! Inconceivable. It could not be of long duration. In a few minutes inevitably she had shaken the devil out and fell heaped at mine, her mother's feet. She sleeps now in monumental peace. If you ask me later I will take you to hear."

"I thank thee," I said. I had decided not to ask her.

"Juanita!" the old woman called. "Vino for Francesca."

"Hey?"

"Federico's Francesca."

"Help yourself," Juanita said, and she thrust a wineskin in my arms. My aunt had told me not ever to drink from the wineskin of a stranger, but on this occasion it was expected of me—and, in addition, I was thirsty.

I drank deep. "There is much good inside of there," I said.

"True speech truly," said the woman Juanita. She accepted the wineskin and applied it to her own mouth. La Rubia's mother was now occupied at the other end of the table. I made gestures to my uncle, but my uncle pretended not to see me. I stood ignored. There were several male men present, but I noticed they had eyes only for Las Rubias, the fat cats. I knew that even if I stood there all night no one would notice me. I waited for some time, and then I crawled under the table and emerged beside my uncle. I applied my fingernails to the flesh of his calf.

"Uncle," I said, "your duty is at an end. We can go now."

"Certainly," my uncle said. "But first I must finish my wineskin. That is for politeness."

"I agree to that," I said. "But this one skin only."

"One skin it is," my uncle said, and he removed it from behind his back—a massive two-gallon skin which had only recently been filled. "Merely this one skin," he said. "And then we go."

As the evening progressed the company grew merrier and louder and secret attempts were made both by my uncle and others

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to replenish his wineskin, but these I thwarted. Finally, it was undeniable that the wineskin was empty, and the evening could no longer be prolonged. My uncle elevated himself to his full height on the table and called in every direction for silence.

"My friends," he said. "I would like to stay all night with you, but it is impossible. There is the matter of duty. Tomorrow, yet another unfortunate may be pierced by the Spider, and it is necessary that I should be in good condition, me and my guts too, for it is the guts that carry the legs, and who knows what extent of distance may be involved. I can no longer indulge my appetites freely, for I have a heavy responsibility to the community. Will someone please pass me a wineskin? This making of speeches is a thirsty affair."

"No!" I said sharply.

"No, no," my uncle said. "Of course not. What am I thinking of? In addition, my friends, as you all know, I am now of some consequence in the world of business and it is essential for me to consult with my partner each day on matters concerning the health and welfare of my livestock. Therefore my departure is a matter not of choice but of necessity. It is my duty."

When my uncle said this there was much cheering and shouting of olé, olé. Everybody got up and accumulated round my uncle, and old Tomaso, the grandfather, fell off the bench, shouting, "They should give him a medal." They struck my uncle congratulatory blows on the back and shook his hand, and in the confusion that followed my uncle was enabled to take two further draughts of wine before I could recover him.

At last, however, we were outside and in transit.

"*Ay de mi!*" my uncle said, halting. "The saints know I have no wish to return among these wine-bibbing louts, but alas, it is necessary. I have forgotten my bandurria."

"I have it here," I said.

"That was thoughtful of you," my uncle said, and he eyed me coldly yet with manifest respect. "Very thoughtful."

"Take it then," I said. "It is yours not only to play but to carry."

My uncle slung the bandurria over his shoulder and sighed deeply, but I had no sympathy for this particular sorrow. I had my own sorrows. I had been up since the crack of day and was tired, and I was deeply perturbed about my early maturity. We walked in silence through the village and down into the valley towards our house on the farthest hill.

"She made a good dance," my uncle said, trying to engage my interest. "Much gracia. An abundance of hip work and a great flicker-flacker of flesh. You would have liked to see it."

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" Fat cat," I said.

" Fat is not indecorative," my uncle said, " in the right places. I speak with authority."

" You speak with wine on your tongue," I said. " Too much and too freely. She is a fat cat with striped hair and artificial painted teeth. I assert that that is undeniable, and also that her fat is not in the right places. No man but a blind man could gaze at her with pleasure."

" At nights," my uncle said knowingly, " all cats are grey."

" That is enough," I declared. " That is a vulgarity." And I preceded my uncle in a contemptuous silence through the valley and up the hill to our house.

My aunt awaited us, but she was not alone. Redhand, son of Miguel Garcias, sat in the wicker chair—my uncle's chair. Redhand was my uncle's partner. He was forty years of age, pock-marked, lean and dark and full of gipsy blood. He was a silent man.

" Redhand has brought me a gift," my aunt said. " A trout."

My uncle took off his bandurria, shuffled his feet and squeezed himself slowly, fold by fold, into the wooden chair that was usually reserved for me. Once he would have laughed and said, " It is indeed savoury to eat scot-free." He would have brought a wine-skin for Redhand and offered him a cigarro from the tin box, but now that Redhand came repeatedly to the house with gifts my uncle no longer liked him. He would sit almost as silent as Redhand himself, casting glances like knives.

" Have you nought then to say to Redhand ? " my aunt enquired.

" The beasts are well ? " my uncle said.

" Undeniably."

I sat down on the floor, as there was no other sitting place. My aunt looked at me with elevated brows and I nodded vigorously, signifying that my uncle's behaviour had been proper at La Rubia's.

" Some people," my uncle said, clearing his throat, " appear to have no home of his own."

Redhand did not reply. Although he was proud and a poacher of great talent he was not a sensitive man, nor, truly, an intelligent one.

" A man," my uncle said, " is like a clock. He is to be valued for his going."

" There will be rain tomorrow," Redhand said. He crossed his feet and stared comfortably into the fire.

" We are ready for bed now," my aunt announced. " It is late. Do you hear, Redhand ? "

" In that case," Redhand said, " I shall go."

" Thank you," my uncle said. " Thank you very much indeed."

" And we thank you in addition," my aunt said, " for the trout."

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She accompanied Redhand to the door.

"Pah!" my uncle said. "Pah! And Pah!" And as the door closed he stood up, his stomach rising high in the air, picked up the trout by the tail, and brought it down like a hammer on the table. "I am in a monstrous temper," he shouted, shivering all over with rage. "I warn you, woman, trifle no further with me. I am capable of any violence."

My aunt took hold of the head of the fish, and, as my uncle still retained possession of the tail, she rapped him sharply on the knuckles. "Francesca," she said, "get me the gutting knife. As for you, my husband, hold your tongue or I shall trample on it. You are an ill-mannered whale of a man and have no more civility than your father had before you."

"That is the last piece of string," my uncle said. "That is an outrageous lie and altogether too much." And he swore an enormous and terrifying oath and kicked off his shoes and jumped in one great bound into the bed.

My aunt smiled to me as she began to gut, and though she was a thin and homely woman with a well-worn face she looked for a moment almost to be beautiful.

"It is a fine fish," she said.

In the days that followed it seemed that the plague of the Spider had come to an end. My uncle declared that he was gratified, but my aunt and I knew that in fact he was bitterly disappointed. He sat all day behind the pigeon loft looking down into the valley for signs of Manuolo. When he dozed off he would wake with a start, his eyes gleaming, and say, "What! Has the reciter come?" He liked the ceremony of the Spider, he liked to play his bandurria in company, and of course he liked the free wine. But best of all he liked the importance, and now there was no more of it.

Fortunately he had his instrument to work upon, but even the instrument did not compensate for the loss of importance. My uncle's instrument was a curious and ingenious affair. He had constructed a hill of sand and clay in a perfect resemblance of the real hill, and he had carved twenty-three sheep out of wood. He had done this with excessive artistry over many months of the winter and now, by studying the sheep on the hill and by making a corresponding arrangement of the small sheep on the small hill he was able, he declared, to tell at a single glance the location of each individual sheep.

"It is an almighty convenience," he said.

When my uncle first constructed the instrument he had also constructed small characters to represent Redhand and himself. As my uncle did not concede that he, Federico, was fat, he con-

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structed these characters with ideal proportions. One, admittedly, was thicker than the other, but this was necessary, my uncle said, equally because of art and because of Redhand's gaunt appearance. Both carvings had originally faces of great, indeed excessive dignity. Now, however, my uncle hacked Redhand's face into a malformation, imposed pock marks of mud and soot, and whittled the partner's figure as thin as a pencil. He permitted Redhand to fall down ravines, left him out all night in the rain, singed him with matches when lighting cigarros, spat wine dregs on him, cuffed him repeatedly, and addressed him in terms of violent abuse.

Redhand the human man came with gifts nearly every evening—a partridge, a trout, a small pike, a rabbit—on one occasion even a hare. My aunt was gratified, her thoughts on the pot, but my uncle's thoughts were elsewhere. Often he became so enraged that he was unable to continue to sit in the presence of Redhand the man, and then he would rush outside and commit a violence on Redhand, the thing.

I was extremely perturbed, and I spoke to my aunt about it. "I am of the opinion that he is jealous, auntie," I said.

My aunt only smiled.

"Evil will come of it, auntie," I warned her. "I have the knowledge of it in my stomach. One day there will be a fearful explosion."

"Tish!" my aunt said. "An explosion of hot air. We have not had such good eating in all my marriage."

And so the days passed. There was a sufficiency to eat, admittedly, but there was no longer laughter and joy in the house. My uncle was a changed man. He did not play on the bandurria. He did not sing. He did not fill his wineskin on the sly. He sawed wood without asking. He sulked continuously, and his mouth hung down like a Chinaman's moustache. I felt the presence of evil like an elephant on the roof and I knew as surely as I knew my own name that some day it would come crashing down on our heads.

I did not like to leave the house. I did not like even to go for my lessons to the Priest, for fear whatever terrible thing must happen might happen in my absence. I no longer thought about maturity. When returning from the village I did not trouble to walk with dignity. I did not bend my knees or wriggle my hips. I cared nothing for allure. I was concerned only to return home with velocity. I did not mind who witnessed it. I ran.

Each time I was absent I knew that this was the terrible time, and finally I was correct. I saw the thing a long way off against the skyline. It had a strange shape and moved in a strange way, and when I was half way up the hill I saw that it was a man carrying a woman. I knew that it was Redhand carrying my aunt. I

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screamed at the pitch of my voice and flogged my legs up the hill. My uncle came round the back of the pigeon loft and joined himself on to the thing, and then I saw the silhouette, more terrifying than ever, of the two men transporting my poor auntie like a broken bag of coal.

They were laying her on the bed as I came through the door. My aunt was very white and her eyes were cloudy. She looked at me and did not see me.

"Tia Maria," I screamed. "Auntie, what is it?"

"The Spider," Redhand said.

My uncle was already plucking the strings of his bandurria, and, pushing me aside, he stepped close to my aunt, fixed her with a stare of great intensity, and began to play. My aunt remained unmoved, and after a few bars of the music my uncle changed the tune. For the next few minutes he did this repeatedly, shifting from tune to tune, and although I had not previously witnessed the ceremony of the Spider I knew that he was seeking to strike my aunt's key—that particular association of sounds which would prove irresistible and start her dancing.

I prayed aloud for the success of the operation, and at last I guessed that my prayer had been answered for I saw a sly smile on my uncle's face. He was now playing gipsy music of an incredible melancholy, and, as he retired step by step, like a man teaching a horse to walk on its hind legs, my aunt rose to her feet and slowly followed him, pace by pace, into the centre of the room.

"Now dance," my uncle whispered. "Dance, my little Mariqua. Dance!" And to my great amazement my aunt postured as if she were man-mounted on an ass and slowly began to rotate her stomach. The music gradually advanced in tempo. My uncle's hairy finger leapt like a flea from string to string and my aunt began to quiver in every part of her anatomy, a wide smile on her face, her fingers going clickety-clack, as if in the manner born. It was an incredible exhibition. Faster and faster went my uncle's fingers. Faster and faster went my aunt's stomach. Her smile grew wider and pimples of sweat broke out on her forehead and streamed down her face under her chin into her bodice. She danced with fearful passion and abandon.

It was most improper conduct in a woman of nearly forty and, watching her, one could not credit that this was truly my thin, quiet, middle-aged aunt. It was all over as unexpectedly as it had begun. My uncle made a great crescendo blare of sound and my aunt pirouetted twice and sank limply on to the bed.

I sat down with a bump on the floor and gaped with my mouth open. I did not quite believe what my eyes had seen. My uncle drew his wrist across his brow and said, "There now, you'll be

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all right now, little chicken," and I noticed that he used a different voice from any voice he had ever used to my unbitten aunt. I had forgotten about Redhand, and so had my uncle, for now, as Redhand stepped out from the wall and spoke, my uncle flung his head up like a startled horse.

"Not a bad bit of fandango," Redhand said, and he nodded in a knowing way. "*Muy bueno*. Not bad at all."

To think that Redhand should have witnessed such an exhibition! I was red as a weal with shame and resentment, but my colour was nothing compared to my uncle's. My uncle was a violent shade of purple, and no sooner had Redhand opened his mouth than my uncle, bellowing loudly, charged like a whole herd of bulls across the room. He crashed his fist down as though it were an axe on Redhand's skull and then he kicked him on the stomach and bit the nearer of his ears and finally he swung his bandurria above his own head and brought it down with a thunderous crack on Redhand's. By this time Redhand was prostrate on the floor and my uncle picked him and the adjoining bandurria up and threw them, united, through the door. And then, as an afterthought, he went out and kicked them both some more.

He stalked back slowly into the room. He had never looked so dignified. "Now, perhaps, we shall have peace in the house," he said. He looked at his hands with pride. "I am a terrible man when roused, Frasquita," he informed me. "A great killer."

I felt the hairs of my head rise in terror. "Redhand?" I whispered. "Is he? . . ."

"Dead," my uncle said. "Dead, and also dismembered."

I rushed to the door. After a little I leaned against the doorpost and, for no good reason, began to cry. Redhand was far from dead, and he had undoubtedly a sufficient number of legs. He was racing over the top of the hill like a man pursued by devils and he still wore my uncle's bandurria, like a halter, round his neck.

There was now naturally no intercourse between Redhand and my uncle, and so it was arranged by the male relatives of both families, meeting in solemn convention, that the sheep should be divided equally between both partners. Unfortunately there were twenty-three sheep, and as neither Redhand nor my uncle would agree, for any consideration, to give up the twenty-third sheep and thus permit the other the importance of a larger flock, it was finally decided that the twenty-third sheep, Margarita by name, should belong half to my uncle and half to Redhand.

This arrangement seemed entirely equitable. My uncle complained bitterly about it, however, saying that it occasioned much extra work, and there was some degree of truth in this, for

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Margarita was a high-spirited and troublesome creature, and she fed more often on Redhand's side of the hill than on my uncle's.

In order equally to achieve precision in his instrument and to ensure Margarita's well being it was necessary for my uncle repeatedly to climb the hill to establish her position. Redhand also was now deeply interested in Margarita and kept a careful watch on her movements. When I was milking the goats I often saw his head appear slyly over the top of the hill, and sometimes my aunt and I, watching from the house, would see Redhand and my uncle both on the hill at the same time, both creeping cautiously about on their bellies.

"That is a great foolishness," I said, "in full-grown men."

My aunt just shrugged her shoulders. "It gets your uncle out of the bed," she said. "And it gives them happiness."

I was studying my aunt with great curiosity at this time. I watched her constantly from the sides of my eyes and searched for some resemblance to my dancing aunt, but did not find it. She was entirely herself again. She was as prim and proper as an Englishwoman, and when she smiled she did not even show her teeth. I wondered much about her and Redhand, and, one day, when we were making cheese, I ventured to inquire.

"My aunt, do you miss him?" I asked.

"Miss who, child?"

"Redhand."

"I miss the good feeding," my aunt said, continuing calmly to chop the curd into small pieces. "Where is your uncle?"

"He is asleep at the back of the pigeon loft."

"In that case," my aunt said, "whose are the feet now raising dust at the break of the hill?"

I went to the door and looked. "It is the lawyer, Fernando," I said.

The lawyer Fernando was a small man with a very large and hairy head. He was noted for his eloquence and he paid my uncle many compliments before informing him with great politeness that he had come on behalf of Redhand Garcias. He said that Redhand wished permission to shear the wool off Margarita, and in return for this concession was willing to pay my uncle a sum of money.

"Never!" my uncle said, trembling. "Never ever!"

"Let us be reasonable," the lawyer said. "If you do not wish money, let us draw up an agreement instead whereby Garcias is entitled to the wool of this sheep this year and you, Federico, are entitled to the wool next year. Is that not full of reason?"

"It is as full of reason as a sow's ear," my uncle said. "It is

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not the time for shearing. This is done only to provoke me, and behold, I am provoked." He was very provoked. He lifted both his feet off the ground and descended in a great stamp of rage. "Of Redhand Garcias I have only this to say," he said. "Be damned to him and may the red ants devour his organs one by one! And if that is not enough for you, Señor, be double-damned to *you*!"

"Husband," my aunt said, "that is no way to speak to an educated man like the notary."

"It is as good a way as any," my uncle said. "I am bitterly disappointed in him. I have always regarded him as my friend. I have told him the secrets of my heart and always employed him . . ."

"Without payment," the notary said.

"Employed him," my uncle continued, "in preference to all other lawyers to defend me, yet here, now, in my time of tribulation he has crept up on me like a viper in the night, briefed by my bitterest enemy, to stab me in the kidneys. Words cannot describe such perfidy. You heard what I said, woman. Be damned to him, I said, and I meant it. Be damned to him and his big head and all his misbegotten progeny!"

"If those be your sentiments," the lawyer said, "it would seem there was a compulsion upon me to send you my account."

"Yes," said my uncle, speaking only to my aunt, "by all means let him send me his account, and when he does I shall take it to a proper lawyer." And my uncle marched inside and slammed the door.

Two days later tragedy struck. Margarita disappeared from view on the hill, and my uncle, investigating, found her lying at the bottom of a small ravine. She had been sheared neatly up her right side from her feet to the centre of her back, and even her tail had been half-sheared. She was dead as mutton.

My uncle's fury had to be seen to be credited. That same night he went to the village. He went running and he was still running when he returned.

"I have seen the notary," he announced. "He is a great man, that Albanez. I have misjudged him in the past when I have called him a louse and a horse-thief. In reality he is a great man—a much greater and better lawyer than Fernando. He gave me a magnificent cigar and he is coming tomorrow to the hill with tape measures and witnesses to investigate the scene of the crime. He is truly a great man. He is as satisfied as I am that Redhand Garcias is directly responsible for the death of my half of poor Margarita. We are agreed that she must have caught a chill on

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Redhand's half and that the subsequent ague must have killed the whole of her."

"If you are agreed upon that," my aunt said, "you are a pair of great fools, for Francesca and I have been to see the beast and she is undoubtedly dead of falling."

"It's a lie," my uncle shouted. "She is dead of the ague."

"The ague does not break backs," my aunt said. "Come, Francesca, it is time thee were in the bed."

In the middle of the night my uncle gave a triumphant shout.

"Waken up!" he shouted. "Are you women now awake? Listen to me. It is a matter of equilibrium. I see it all now. Poor Margarita was walking across the ledge in her customary fashion, but, being without her customary proportions, being light on the one side and heavy on the other, she would have had to walk like so—" and he jumped out of the bed and showed us how Margarita must have walked—"and she lost her balance, poor ill-treated being, and fell to her death in the valley below."

This explanation gave my uncle much satisfaction, and he told us that it also gave satisfaction to the notary. "We have now got this Redhand Garcias at the point of our boots," he said. "He is up the queer apple tree all right."

My uncle was very pleased, and very, very busy. Each day he got out of the bed at the first asking and went importantly off to the village to transact business, taking his dinner with him in a bag, and sometimes not returning till late at night. "There is need for many consultations," he explained to us, twirling his moustaches, and turning his head away so that we could not smell his breath. "And, naturally, my presence is indispensable. It is a tedious affair," he said, sighing, "but one must suffer it."

He had never had such a happy time. Some days he saw the notary for five minutes and sometimes he did not see the notary at all, but this did not displease him. He would sit in the notary's outer office and speak to the clients who waited and to the clients who went in and out.

"In this way I am gaining a great knowledge of the law," he informed us. Although my uncle said this and believed this, I do not think it to be true. I went sometimes from the Priest's to collect my uncle at the notary's and I did not ever see him learning points of law. He was always too busy talking, telling this one and that of his affairs and of the great damage which he and the law together intended to inflict on Redhand Garcias. He had never had so much importance, and it was a source of satisfaction to my aunt and me to see him so content.

Then one evening he came home early with a tight mouth and dry moustaches.

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"So," my aunt said. And what calamity now?"

"You have hit the bird in the eye, woman," my uncle said. "A calamity it is. A dirty great monster of a calamity. It concerns the mutton of Margarita. That accursed man Redhand has entered a counter litigation of his own. It appears he has had the audacity to go to that rascally lawyer Fernando and between them they have concocted the charge that I have committed a felony by distributing among my friends portions of the mutton of Margarita to which I am not entitled in law. And not only," my uncle said, "but they have appended a list of all the people to whom I gave the mutton, and the list is a formidable one. It is a monstrous allegation."

"But it is true, uncle," I said.

"Of course it is true," my uncle said. "That is why it is so monstrous." And he sat down in the wicker chair, hid his face in his hands, and sighed like a bellows.

"And what say'st the notary of all this?" my aunt inquired.

"The minimum," my uncle said. "He shakes his head."

My aunt pursed her lips together until they disappeared from sight. "This, then, is serious," she said. But it was not until she had taken counsel of her pillow that she spoke her mind to my uncle. She commenced at waking time next day and continued for one whole hour. My aunt was not a loquacious woman and one could judge the gravity of the matter from this, her eloquence.

"A peasant between two lawyers," my aunt said repeatedly, "is like a fish between two cats." And she told my uncle in memorable detail what had happened to many other persons who had gone to law, and she explained to my uncle with great force and vehemence that in the course of this long-drawn-out litigation he would lose not only the price of the sheep Margarita, but all his other remaining sheep, and the two goats, and the house and the bed, and no doubt also even the wicker chair in which he sat. "We shall all be ruined," she said.

My uncle said this was an exaggeration. My uncle said, moreover, that every single word my aunt had spoken was an exaggeration. My uncle said that my aunt's tongue was long enough to go twice round her neck and choke her, and, having said this, my uncle got very angry and stamped out of the house, saying that he hoped it would.

My aunt sat down in the wicker chair and wept. She was not a weeping woman, and I was so perturbed that I knelt down by her side and wept with her. My aunt wept solidly for several minutes, then she sat up straight and sniffed and cuffed me on the top of the head. "Enough," she said. "There is the supper to make." For the rest of that night she did not speak as much as one single word, and although next day she spoke to me she did not

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speak to my uncle—no, nor even listen, nor on the next day, nor on all the days that followed.

It was a sad, unhappy house. The litigation filled all our minds as a key fills a lock. I thought of nothing else, not even the Corpus Christi fiesta, and at the dress rehearsal of our play I twice forgot my lines. Afterwards, I spoke to the Priest of our troubles and I asked him his advice.

The Priest considered for a long time, his eyes closed, and I think, perhaps, he prayed for guidance. He said at last that, as litigation concerned not only a man himself but all his relatives, this was a matter in which both families should unite to bring pressure equally upon Redhand and my uncle to desist from litigation. "That is poor advice, but my best," he said.

I went personally to the relatives, one by one, and they were all agreed that litigation was a disaster of magnitude and that a meeting should take place to reconcile Redhand to my uncle and my uncle to Redhand, but my uncle's relatives were of the opinion that this meeting should take place in my uncle's house and Redhand's relatives were of the opinion that the meeting should take place in Redhand's house, and neither my uncle's relatives nor Redhand's relatives would concede.

I returned to the Priest's.

"There is only one alternative," I told him. "The meeting must be here in your house, and you must preside."

"No, no, it is not my concern," the Priest said. "I do not wish to be implicated."

"You are already implicated, Father," I said, "for you had the very best cut off Margarita. In the circumstances I consider it your duty to preside."

The Priest put his hands on his stomach and laughed his little high laugh that sounded like coins jingling in his throat. I was bitterly disappointed in him.

"It's all right," he said, still laughing. "Don't cry. It's all right, little one. I consent to it."

The meeting was not a success. It was the Priest's idea that one family should assemble at the front of the house and one family should assemble at the rear of the house, and that he should move as an ambassador from one family to the other until there was sufficient accord for the two families to meet peaceably together. The Priest had a great horror of violence.

Unfortunately when my uncle, accompanied by my aunt and myself, arrived at the meeting place, Redhand's family was gathered at the front of the house, and my uncle's family was gathered in the backyard. My uncle stopped at the garden gate and dug his feet into the dust. "No, no," he said. "Perdition! A thousand

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times no! Every man must eat a peck of dirt before he dies, but there is enough here to fill a wheelbarrow. If there is to be a front of the house, then naturally it belongs to me and my family, and there can be no meeting and no discussion until this condition is fulfilled. Francesca," my uncle said, "tell what I have said to thine aunt. Even thy aunt will agree to this."

"I have heard every stupid word he said," my aunt said to me. My aunt was still not speaking to my uncle. "Please to inform him politely that he is a great shatter-pated dolt of a man with no more brains than a black beetle, and inform him also, if you please, that I do not agree."

My uncle was not to be budged, however, and after much discussion about the front and the back of the house, everyone went home in very great tempers, and it seemed there was now no way at all to stop the litigation and to prevent us all from being ruined.

Then on the very morning of the fiesta, as my uncle and I were about to depart together, my aunt took up an important position by the door. "I am now speaking," she announced. "There has been enough of this foolishness. Husband, you will seek out Redhand Garcias at the fiesta, and shake him by the hand . . ."

"Never," my uncle said. "Never, never, never! Never in a month of fiestas."

"You will shake him by the hand," my aunt said, unperturbed, "and you will go together to one lawyer and then to the other and you will inform them that there is to be no more litigation."

"You are mad, *mujer*," my uncle said, and he swore one of his longest oaths.

"Hold your tongue, old windbag," my aunt said, "and listen. This is of Corpus Christi and it is the time for amity and good sense. There has been too much man nonsense. The mother of Redhand has been to see me this morning while you were still in the bed, and she has whispered in my ear. The reason that Redhand wanted to shear the sheep Margarita was commendable. He required wool to knit a pair of stockings. He has knit these stockings with his own hand and he has done so with artistry. Look for thyself. The old mother has presented them to me."

My uncle and I both looked at the stockings, and my uncle puffed and swelled and grew purple in the face.

"There is, therefore," my aunt said, "no longer cause for enmity nor for litigation of any kind."

"There is cause," my uncle said, exploding, "not only for litigation but for murder, and I shall commit it. I shall tear him limb from limb. I shall thrust my fingers through his eyes and out of his ears. I shall seize him by the entrails and turn him inside

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out, and "—my uncle said—" I shall also kick his teeth in. I am a patient and an amicable man, but . . ."

" You are only an objectionable noise," my aunt said calmly. " And you have not the intelligence of a louse of average size. The stockings, naturally, are for Francesca."

" Eh, what ? What, woman ? "

" For me ! " I said, gaping.

" For no other," my aunt said. " Consider the size. Here, child, take them and carry them, for economy, and before you come to the village, sit down and put them on. Here is string for the tops. Yes," my aunt said to my uncle, " they are for Francesca for the fiesta, and Redhand has knit them with his own two hands."

My uncle seized the stockings from me and held them up, inspecting their length and size. " They are truly for Francesca," he said, and he sat down and scratched his head and blew out air like a whale and looked at my aunt in great perplexity.

" All these gifts ! " he said. " All the time . . . all this long time . . . it was Francesca . . ."

" Of course," my uncle said over and over again. " Of course, of course ! " He looked at my aunt and he looked at me, and he began to laugh. He laughed straight from the belly, and the tears ran in streams down his cheeks. " It is natural," he said at last. " It is all quite fitting, although I fancy our little Frasquita will require a younger and less silent specimen for her husband."

" *Madre mia*, I should hope it," I said. I tried to look very angry, but I could not think of angry things to say. I was extremely red and extremely embarrassed and extremely pleased. I took the stockings in my hand and inspected them, and my uncle began to laugh again.

" They are truly nice stockings," I said. " Although Redhand Garcias has a great presumption."

" He is a big, foolish, sheep of a man," my aunt agreed.

" He is a fine fellow," my uncle said. " He is my good friend and partner, and I would ask you to remember it. The character of a man is not to be judged by women. He is an excellent fellow, old Redhand. Hey, ho, it is a beautiful day, and the world is truly a beautiful place, despite all your bad temper, woman."

My aunt and I exchanged smiles, and my uncle, bustling about the door and trying to conceal his happiness, said, " Come, then, thou Francesca, have I to wait all day for thee and thy stockings ? "

And so we set off for the fiesta. As we walked down the hill my uncle sang love songs at the pitch of his voice, smiling all the time, singing right into my face, and I tossed my head and tushed angrily at him, and my heart sang like a songbird. Truly the whole of life had undergone change. You could not have found

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a happier girl and her uncle in the entire province of Andalusia.

At the outside of the village, I sat down and drew on my stockings while my uncle hey'd and ho'd and poked me with badinage. I did not care. I felt my stockings warm and tight on my legs, and I was filled with a great serenity and satisfaction.

"Uncle," I said, "after the fiesta I shall require you to meet me and escort me home, if you please."

"But thou hast always walked home alone, Frasquita," my uncle said.

"That was formerly," I informed him. "It would not be fitting now." I walked slowly and with elegance, and my heart swelled with pride. "It would not be safe," I said.

* * *

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

Writers have always been aware of the influence of background on their characters, and some of the places their characters lived in have become famous. Can you recognize these houses? Count one point for every house and one each for the source and author. Answers on page 143.

1. *This house was old and historic; but it was a sad disappointment to its romantic-minded guest.*
2. *"But only a host of phantom listeners*
   That dwelt in the lone house then
   Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
   To that voice from the world of men . . ."
3. *A Corner House, where there might be honey, still, for tea.*
4. *Overcrowding must have been this lady's problem—and no wonder, with a house of such an awkward shape and size, that she despaired over her family troubles!*
5. *At this famous address there lived two friends, one eccentric and brilliant, the other—well—elementary.*
6. *This dwelling-place was large enough to house a zoo.*
7. *And this one (triangular, known locally as "The King's Whim," and possessing inaccessible attics) certainly lived up to its strange name.*
8. *Here two travellers were waylaid, imprisoned and starved, while their grim captor did his best to drive them to suicide.*
9. *She suffered toil, humiliation, loveless marriage; she became hard and ruthless in order to save this house she loved.*
10. *This charming house-by-the-sea, which even smelt of fish, had once known better days when it was not a house at all.*

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IT WAS MUTUAL

So perfectly matched, so mature and sensible their quiet courtship

by COLIN BULLARD

IT seemed natural that a young widow of obvious sensibility should choose a quiet little spot like Bidemouth, on the Cornish Coast, to spend the first few weeks of her new, heart-broken loneliness. It was only in such surroundings, the local folk surmised, that such an elegant, delicate creature could hope to overcome her sorrow and win back a state of mind which, if not happy, would at least enable her to face the future with calmness and courage.

The widower, Armytage, had arrived a week after Mrs. Williams and had taken up residence at the *Manor*, which, despite its name and although a good hotel, was not considered to be quite in the select class of the *Ship*, which was the hostelry favoured by the widow.

Armytage, in his early forties, proved to be a quiet and pleasant man, who concealed the grief which he clearly suffered with no less fortitude but more stoicism than Mrs. Williams, who had been seen one afternoon on a prominent sand-dune looking out to sea with tears running freely down her delicate cheeks.

Discussing these two interesting visitors in the butcher's queue, Mrs. Coombe expressed her view that it was a pity they did not get together.

"What!" exclaimed her neighbour indignantly. "And them a-suffering as they are with bleeding hearts, poor things!"

"She don't mean what *you* mean, Liz," chipped in a stoutish, florid woman with a throaty chuckle. "She just means to go about together. Sympathize with each other, like."

Much as their well-wishers might desire the development of this companionship in distress, there seemed little prospect of it materializing. Mrs. Williams roamed disconsolately about the solitary shore, while Armytage went off for long tramps across the lonely, enveloping moors.

And yet, argued the observant townsfolk, they must have become aware of each other, for it was early in the year and there were only half a dozen visitors in the place.

It was thus with a revival of interest which was almost electrify-

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ing, that the report went round that the two had met.

Armytage had broken routine and dropped into the *Ship* for a drink. He had chatted to Steele, the landlord, about the country he had visited that day. He had had difficulty in identifying a certain Tor which he had climbed. Others were brought into the conversation. Maps were produced with drinks all round. It became late. Armytage 'phoned the *Manor* and dined at the *Ship*.

Mrs. Williams came in to dinner in a simple black frock with narrow white frilling at throat and elbows. She sat at her usual table, but, although this happened to be not far from that occupied by Armytage, each remained solemnly aloof during the meal.

The trivial incident of her handbag slipping to the floor brought about the desired introduction, for when she went out to the lounge for her coffee the handbag remained where it had fallen. When Armytage rose a few moments later he noticed it lying there, and carried it to her in the lounge where they had coffee together and exchanged a few polite commonplaces.

George Purkiss, the waiter, and Mavis Armstrong, the waitress, recounted proudly how they had seen the handbag, but had left it there for the very purpose which had been achieved.

The news was of the first magnitude and, from that time on, interest never showed any signs of flagging.

Two days later Armytage booked old Leigh Coggins and his boat, called for Mrs. Williams, whom he had obviously telephoned, and escorted her upon an enjoyable two hours' sail out to the headland and back across the bay.

Leigh Coggins, although referred to as "old," was not so old as to be entirely oblivious to feminine charm, but his observations on this occasion had been aggravatingly confined to the lady's beautiful teeth.

"Mun made her to laugh more'n once," chuckled Leigh, shaking his head over his tankard in the *Boar's Head*. "She'n got as voine a zet o' teeth as ever I zee. White as milk they be and a sparkle in un."

Another two days passed with all Bidemouth concentrating upon Mrs. Williams' sadly drooping mouth, scarcely crediting that it had ever smiled, yet intrigued to catch a glimpse of the teeth which had inspired Leigh Coggins to such unwonted heights of admiration and eloquence.

Then Armytage called for her again, this time in mid-morning, and they set off for the moors with luncheon, including a bottle of cider, packed in a knapsack.

It was not long before the two were about together all day and every day. Melancholy slipped from their expressions and their

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deportment almost visibly. The sunshine and salt winds brought colour back into their woebegone cheeks. Their eyes won back the shine of delight and laughter. They played golf and tennis; they roamed far over the moors; they sailed and bathed. Their bodies became golden brown.

Bidemouth was enthralled, awaiting breathlessly the obvious solution to a situation for which everyone felt a personal responsibility, although in what respect all would have found it equally difficult to define.

The courtship was quietly restrained, sensible and mature. Conversation, although inevitably imbued with romantic inferences now and then, confined itself generally, according to the reports of waitresses, bar-tenders, caddies, fishermen and general gossip, to their everyday lives and to the local scenery and people. Gradually, however, the personal note was creeping in; their own affairs and interests came in for discussion.

"I hope," said Armytage, one afternoon when they were basking on the sands, "that some day you will feel able to live again in the place where you were so happy. The house itself must be charming, apart from that marvellous view from your loggia. It must be calling you back in spite of yourself."

"It is nice of you to wish that for me. I think I could almost bear it if it were not for the terrible loneliness there would be."

Their eyes met and flickered away.

"The place you have described would heal the past," said Armytage.

"Perhaps," she sighed. "But lately I have thought I would sell up and be independent of any ties, just as you are."

"I may not be as independent as you think," he said slowly.

She flashed a smile at him. "You must be fairly independent or you could not be staying on and on here, without worrying."

"It is true I've never been dependent on a job, Anna. Knocked about the world, as I've told you. But I'm not sure that is really being independent. A parasite some people would call me. Do you think it is a worthless sort of life, Anna?"

"Of course not, Dick." She allowed her hand to rest on his forearm for a fleeting second. "You do good in many indirect ways. I've gathered that much. But . . ." she hesitated.

"Do not stop, Anna," he said gently.

"No. It was thoughtless of me."

"Were you going to say something about poor Marjorie? Don't worry, my dear. I can bear to talk about her now. I seem to have grown away from that life. I know it seems callous and I almost wish I still felt the pain."

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"I know how you feel," she said slowly. "I feel, I think, the same about Geoffrey. Sort of remote. I don't quite understand why—I mean how I have got over missing him so soon. Do you think I am shallow?"

"No. You're not that—and never could be—but you're still young. It is nature. What were you going to say about Marjorie?"

"Oh, just that one of the things I like about you is that, even though you are independent, you don't splash it about. You like quiet, simple things. And you must miss her sharing them more than you will admit."

"Perhaps I do," he agreed. "But you, Anna. You like the simple things, too."

"I know. This place for instance. I am growing to love it very much, with its winding, narrow streets and little white cottages."

"And old Leigh Coggins," he laughed.

"Don't tease, Dick. Of course I love him. I think he's a pet."

The underlying hint of the warmth and confidence which this attractive and capable woman felt towards him was very pleasant to Armytage. It spurred him to a responsive intimacy. After a pause, he spoke her name quietly, gazing out over the sparkling ocean.

"Anna."

"Yes, Dick."

"Anna, do you think I am the sort of chap who could ever marry again?"

"Yes, Dick, I think so," she said softly. "I hope so."

They were so simple and so sensible about the arrangements for their marriage.

The hotel reservations in London, the packing and forwarding of their luggage, the farewells to their many acquaintances—all were arranged smoothly and efficiently; so also was their own departure after the simple ceremony.

Two months later, however, Bidemouth was dumbfounded and griefstricken to hear that a violent end had overtaken both its protégés, so perfectly matched and equipped though they had been to enjoy so much of life's abundant endowments. Anna had fallen from a railway carriage travelling at express speed. Armytage had pulled the communication cord but, by the time the train came to rest, had himself reached a state of complete collapse and died without regaining consciousness.

Bidemouth was even more thunderstruck and utterly robbed of tranquillity for months when the newspapers flared forth the startling information that the husband had been disposed of by the

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employment of an obscure Eastern powder, compounded of a certain snake venom and antidotes which eliminated all symptoms except those of an acute heart attack. This, it transpired, after wide investigation, had already been enterprisingly used, to Anna's considerable material advantage, in the cases of two previous husbands.

Apparently, recognizing intuitively the implications of his seriously increasing indisposition during the journey and also, it may be imagined, perceiving a certain smug triumph on the pretty features of his dainty wife, Armytage had summoned his last strength to hurl her to a rather more gruesome doom before his own overtook him.

Even in his last thinking moments, however, his own craftsmanship did not desert him, for it prompted him to pull the communication cord.

Whether the look of horror and distraction on his features, when they found him, was assumed in order to convince all concerned that his wife's fall had been accidental, or whether it expressed his reactions towards his own impending and untimely fate, will never be known.

The former is probably the truth, as his previous three wives had all died accidentally, in different parts of the world, each loss having this in common, that it appeared to distract and horrify him almost as much as it benefited him.

It was all so mutual.

* * *

CAUGHT UP

A train on a miserable branch railroad was jogging along at a distressingly low rate of speed when all of a sudden it came to a dead stop. One of the passengers, whose patience had become exhausted, asked the guard the cause of the delay.

"There's a herd of cows on the track," he answered.

In about ten minutes the train got under way again, jerking along convulsively for about a mile or two, when it came to a halt. The passenger sought out the guard.

"What in thunder is the matter now?" he demanded irritably.

"Why, we've caught up to them cows again!" said the guard with pride.

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THE ENGLISH GAME

If you have a right ambition you will desire to excel all boys at cricket

LORD CHESTERFIELD to his son

Assist, all ye Muses, and join to rehearse
An old English sport, never praised yet in verse ;
'Tis Cricket I sing, of illustrious fame,
No nation e'er boasted so noble a game.

Then fill up your glass, he's the best that drinks most.
Here's the Hambledon Club !—who refuses the toast ?
Let's join in the praise of the bat and the wicket,
And sing in full chorus the patrons of cricket.

THE REV. MR. COTTON, of Winchester, 1778

Foreign Opinion

The process is always the same, and I am writing not to inform the public of the manner to play cricket, but to offer them my regrets that some people, sensible, polished, and well-raised, can find a pleasure to take in a labour so dangerous. To stand upright during so many hours of an extreme heat ; to take a violent exercise without any need ; to run deliberately a grave danger not less than that which one is obliged to encounter on a field of battle—all is folly of the most profound. I cannot believe that there is really some pleasure at all in it. You English are eccentric ; and the verity of it is that you play cricket because in playing it you show yourselves different from all the rest of the world . . .

ANATOLE GONJON, *in St. James' Gazette*, 1884

Well Caught !

It was, I believe, in one of Sir John's matches that two batsmen took root. His teams varied in talents and membership every match. At last one of the batsmen mishit a long-hop and 'skied' the ball very high in mid-wicket. Of course, as usual, five or six fieldsmen advanced with outstretched arms to make the catch. With rare

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presence of mind and true leadership, Sir John (Squire) cried out: "Thompson's catch! Leave it to Thompson!" Whereat each of the five or six fieldsmen retreated obediently—and the ball fell harmlessly to the earth. Thompson was not playing that week.

NEVILLE CARDUS, *Autobiography*

Last Over

There we sat in the circle vast,
  Hard by the tents, from noon,
And looked as the day went slowly past,
  And the runs came, all too soon;
And never, I think, in the years gone by,
  Since cricketer first went in,
Did the dying so refuse to die,
  Or the winning so hardly win.

Ladies clapped, as the fight was fought,
  And the chances went and came;
And talk sank low, till you almost thought
  You lived in the moving game.
O good lads in the field they were,
  Laboured and ran and threw;
But we that sat on the benches there
  Had the hardest work to do!

What is it? forty, thirty more?
  You in the trousers white,
What did you come to Harrow for,
  If we lose the match tonight!
If a finger's grasp, as a catch comes down
  Go a thousandth part astray—
Heavens! to think there are folks in town
  Who talk of the game as play!

"Over"—batsmen steadily set;
  "Over"—maiden again;
If it lasts a score of overs yet,
  It may chance to turn the brain.
End it, finish it! such a match
  Shortens the breath we draw.
Lose it at once, or else—A catch!
  Ah!

EDWARD E. BOWEN,
Harrow Songs and Other Verses

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Fourth Dimension

This was the last over, and Bloody Bourton wanted two runs to win. Even the Colonel sat up tensely and put his flask away in his pocket. Everybody was on his toes with the solitary exception of Briggs, who was standing deep at long-on where for a long time he had had nothing to do. I noticed a faint blue haze hanging about him in the still evening air; I looked again, and perceived that Briggs was lighting his pipe.

Alfie came up to the wicket with his familiar hop, skip and jump, tousled fair hair falling into his eyes. The Bloody Bourton captain, whose success in hitting a six had gone to his head, ran down the pitch and hit the ball a full toss. He caught it awkwardly high up on the splice of the bat, but it was a hefty clout all the same, and the ball flew high towards long-on. Everybody looked at Briggs; but Briggs, with his big hands cupping a match, was still puffing away at his pipe. The whole team yelled at him. Sammy shouted terrible sea-oaths at the top of his voice. I shouted, the Colonel shouted, even Lord Orris shouted. Only Goaty Pegleg, who had not yet tumbled to what was happening, remained silent.

At last Briggs looked up, and saw the ball falling towards him. He did not move. Without hurry he put the box of matches into his left pocket and the pipe into his right pocket. Then, as one who receives manna from heaven he extended his enormous hands in front of him.

A full half-minute later Goaty Pegleg, travelling slowly in the Fourth Dimension, declared loudly: "He's caught it! We've won!"

JOHN MOORE, *Brensham Village*

This Space Reserved

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE
of
ENGLISH CRICKET
which died at the Oval
on
29*th August*, 1882.
Deeply lamented by a large circle
of Sorrowing Friends and Acquaintances.
R.I.P.

N.B.—The body will be cremated,
and the Ashes taken to Australia.

From "*The Sporting Times*," August 1882, *on the occasion of England's first defeat by the Australians.*

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FROST IN APRIL

There was just one thing they had forgotten

by MALACHI WHITAKER

THE farm of Harry Inn Corner stood high and alone on a moorland shoulder. It faced west. On its south side rose an untidy stone shed, called the mistal, in which twenty cows were housed, and behind it was a grey-green, neglected garden, where coarse grass grew in uneven clumps. Just in front of the house a stony road ran, twisting to the right within sighting distance, continuing downhill until it found a sanctuary of trees, and there, apparently, vanishing. To the left, it ran an unseen distance of three miles, up and down the inhospitable shoulder, hedged with wind-blown thorns and black, forgotten brambles, past only Joyts and Pennypot—farms a field's length from the lane—until it joined the main road for Farchester at Starting Post.

The wife of the farmer was a little woman, with a red, tight-drawn skin, and great, brown, terrified eyes. She started in a painful way at any sound from the outside world, yet she always spoke loudly, repeating what she said two and sometimes three times, "You gi' me a fright; I say, you gi' me a fright." The jerky ticking of the octagonal wall-clock was the only noise she seemed really to understand, and to draw comfort from. She would stare at the clock when in any predicament, all the time softly stroking the sheepskin rug which was tied on the back of a wooden chair. She seemed to be subject to some fear which never left her, and which solitude increased slowly but inevitably.

She had six great, broad sons, inarticulate, like the animals they tended, and after them, a daughter. Tildy, short for Matilda, had been a pretty baby, with a crown of tangled bronze curls, very hard to tend. She had small, oblique blue eyes, and a voice as clear as a thrush's. But she had very little to say, keeping her voice only to sing with. She inherited the tight-drawn, red skin of her mother, rough to the touch and scaly; yet she had some hidden charm that drew a second glance. Occasionally, the moorland wind hurt her eyes, making them red and sore, and she would look away when speaking to anybody.

Tom Morris, the father, appeared to be the only normal member

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of the family. He was a neat man, with straw-coloured hair and moustache, a very pleasing tenor voice, and a fondness for breeding canaries. He sang in the chapel choir, and had a religious bias. Yet, seeing him in the farm kitchen, humming to himself as he wiped his hands on the soiled towel near the sink where the pump was, you might have found in him an answer to a strange riddle. He loved his canaries and his singing practice, and made a great show of working hard at the farm ; but if there was any labour that could be put on to another's shoulders, he would contrive to do it in a way that was not, at first glance, discernible.

The six sons, uncouth lads, grew up into strong, heavy men. As soon as they were of an age they married and left home, with just enough knowledge and ambition to be labouring hinds for other men. They seemed eager to leave the farm in which they were born and reared, and never returned even so much as for a visit at Christmas, or Easter, or other festival. If they had cared for their baby sister, they never showed it ; but sometimes the little girl and her mother would set off and call on the nearest ones, and play with their sturdy children, and turn back home as darkness fell.

The youngest son had done well for himself. He had married an idiot girl whose grandmother had died and left her five hundred pounds and a house of furniture. His brothers envied him, because he need only work for two or three days a week. But the idiot girl proved prolific, and with a steadily increasing flock of children he found that, in spite of his wife's wealth, he would have to look for regular work. Everybody in the district was well supplied, so with a sinking heart he returned to work for his father. Marriage and money had a little armed him, and while his father offered him the barest pittance for wage, he on his part stipulated that he should not arrive at the farm before six o'clock, until after the morning milking was over, and the milk in the cans all ready to take to the station. He did not often work near the house.

With the men and sons away, and the girl now seventeen, life should have been easier for Mrs. Morris ; but it never was. The house was a large one. There was an unused parlour, stuffy with inherited lumber, and earth-smelling from the green plants which entirely filled the small window space. There was a large living kitchen, the floor of which constantly echoed to the clatter of iron-rimmed footwear. There were stone-floored sculleries, pantries, and passages, all to scrub interminably, besides the upstairs rooms, and the noisy, voracious, dirt-making birds in the attic. The house was always spotless, the result of unceasing labour. The farm mistress's little leisure was spent in mending torn clothing, seated in a chair beneath the great paraffin lamp which hung from the centre of the dark ceiling.

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Again, the poultry was spread far and wide, and the two women had it all to tend. The poultry houses were in sheltered corners of the various fields, and it was a long way from one to another. Some of the hens were kept near to the house, and were continually squawking and flying heavily from under impatient feet into the bare branches of the few meagre trees, then back to the ground. The cows were shut up from October to May, and their gentle lowing, deep and true as an organ note, instead of breaking the silence, seemed to make it more profound.

Work at the farm began early and ended late. Winter was a cruel time. Sometimes, as Tildy carried the forty great pails of water from the well in the road to the shippon, two for each row, the child would pause, and pressing her numbed hands into her armpits, would look around her at the frozen hill-tops, and unknown desires would burst into bloom in her thin bosom, only to die as she heard her father's voice asking how much longer she was going to stand there "gapin' at nowt." The farmer far preferred sitting milking, with his head against the warm flanks of Bess or Beauty, to carrying the water in.

The dapper little farmer was proud of his daughter's capacity for work, and also of her sweet, clear voice. As soon as she was old enough she went with him into the chapel choir, and even two or three nights a week to practise singing. The long walk to Starting Post and back home they reckoned as nothing; indeed, they never thought of it, or dreamed of putting off a practice, no matter how bad the weather. This was innocent joy. Meantime the mother would sit listening to the tock, tick-tock of the wall-clock, her eyes wide with fear, her ears alert for alien sound. But her life was set, planned for her by her husband, and she dared not deviate from his ways. He was a miser.

At seventeen, Tildy's rebel curls had fallen into an orderly beauty. Her eyes were much stronger, and she could now, if she wished, stare back into other eyes, but the force of habit was too strong in her, and usually she looked away when addressing anybody, and appeared to be thinking of other things. Her mouth had a droop to it; she suffered much from backache, yet she did not complain, except very rarely to her mother. When she felt worse than usual, her mother would go out into the howling wind, rain, or bitter frost of the winter's dawn and carry the heavy pails of water to the patient cattle, while her father sat snug and warm behind a cow and sang, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour," in a voice sweet enough to draw tears from the eyes of the devil himself.

It would have been easy for him to have had water laid on from the well to the byre; he was always going to do it, but he could not bear to spend the money. He grudged the coal on the fire, the butter on the bread. He grudged his son the few shillings he paid him, and

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never gave his daughter a penny. Yet he was a very pleasant man to talk to. When his friends came to look at his canaries they envied his home, his birds, his cattle, his poultry. They knew he was close, yet they envied him even for that, saying he would have a tidy bit laid by. Before their eyes Tildy mixed food for the poultry, or cleaned the byre, or swilled out the yard, clad in a thick grey frock, with a little fringed shawl tied over her hair; singing, though her hands were red and swollen.

In the summer of her nineteenth year, after the haymaking was over and done with, she met Irving Barr, and they fell in love; not so much in love as in ecstasy. He was tall, over a foot higher than she was, with a clear, tanned skin, under which the blood flowed easily. He, too, had blue eyes, but they were large and full, and his lips and nostrils were clear-cut as a statue's. His hands were smooth, strong, and small; they did not look like a farmer's hands.

He had come with his newly-widowed mother from over the hills by Adderthwaite, to an easier farm near Starting Post, known as Jonah's Eye. They were having everything up to date at Jonah's Eye, even a bathroom—unknown luxury. He was twenty and unaware of his own good looks and the effect they had on the village girls.

First, he heard Tildy's voice in the choir. She was singing a solo. From under an unfashionable hat her curls cascaded. She was looking into a dusty corner of the chapel as though she saw an angel there, and her clear voice broke through her lips like a singing spring. Not a muscle of the young man's face moved, yet at that moment he had determined that only this girl should be his wife. As she finished singing she brought her glance to his, and for some seconds their looks embraced in a shaft of summer sunlight.

He tried hard to become acquainted with her, but by some means her father always managed to put him off. Mr. Morris would talk affably with him, and contrive to send Tildy home before he had a chance to say one word to her. He was baffled by the unseen barrier. There was no reason for it. Here was a man with a daughter, here was a young man who wanted in a right and proper way to come courting that daughter. Yet Mr. Morris smiled and chatted, even invited him to see the canaries, but always saw to it that Tildy had no opportunity of talking to him. It was simple enough to other people. Tom Morris did not want to part with his hard-working daughter.

One night, as she was going to bed in her little room over the front passage, the girl heard a low, sweet whistle. She flushed, and, pulling on her dress, leaned out of the window. To the still figure beneath her in the garden she whispered, "Hush! Oh, please, please be quiet; father'll hear you!"

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For answer the young man looked up at her earnestly, and saying " Good-night " in low tones, he turned from her, strode through the neglected garden, vaulted the wall, and was gone. She watched him as long as she could see him in the dusk, and as she climbed into her bed she hid her smiling face in her hands and hoped she would dream about him.

Sometimes he came to wish her good-night, and sometimes he did not. She would stand in her room, not daring to undress until there was no further likelihood of his coming. They grew to exchanging a word or two, then they talked, the fear of being found out adding a delicious zest to their conversations. One night he persuaded her to climb out of the window, and they spent a fearful yet happy half-hour walking up and down the field.

" Why can't I come for you in the evenings and take you out ? " he asked. " There's no reason why you shouldn't come."

" Perhaps if you asked father he'd let me," she suggested.

The following Sunday the young man asked the older one if he could come courting Tildy.

" I'm afraid my girl's too young," he answered, with a deprecating smile. " She's only seventeen."

" Nineteen," corrected the young man, unguardedly.

" Seventeen," answered the father coldly, giving him a deadly smile. " Somebody must have been informing you wrong." And he would not say any more.

" It's no use, Tildy," Irving said, as they walked the lane late that night. " He thinks you're too young."

" Don't vex him," she said imploringly, and turned back to go home.

Winter put an end to many of their meetings, but their love grew steadily. The young man went to chapel each Sunday, and there they were able to steal glances at one another all through the long service. Always on Sunday nights, unless snow was on the ground and his footmarks could be seen, he came to kiss her cold, frightened lips, and to wish her good-night. At times he grew wildly angry because of her father ; he wanted to climb up into her little room.

" Oh, no ! " she cried, because she was terrified—not afraid of him, but afraid that he should see the ill-furnished little place, with its wooden chest in place of dressing-table, and tin box in place of chair. " You mustn't say you'll come in, or I'll never open the window to you again ! "

" Well, let me kiss the pillow where you put your head," he said ; and he would not be content until she brought her pillow for him to kiss.

One evening in spring the girl asked her mother if she could go

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out. The father was away, and they did not expect him back until late. Her mother stared at her, and all at once put a trembling hand on her arm. She said, "Go out, Tildy, I say go out, Tildy, before he comes. But get back before he comes back, or else—" She did not say or else what, but Tildy knew.

She met Irving as they had arranged. They walked over the far hill and up on to the moors, where last year's heather crackled beneath their feet. They talked and kissed as they walked, and could not bear to turn their footsteps homeward; but at last they had to do so.

"I shall come back again to kiss you good-night and to see that everything's all right," he said as they parted, not too near the house.

When she entered the kitchen, pretty and flushed and warm, her father was waiting for her. He had his hat on, and there was a stick laid across his knees. In the opposite doorway her mother was standing, holding her left hand up to her cheek. The girl hung back, her face paling.

"Come here, Tildy," said her father, softly smiling; and still smiling, he pinioned her hands behind her back and beat her until she screamed. Half his blows fell on the girl and half on her mother.

When the girl went up to her room she opened the window wide. Then she lay down on her bed, wiping away her tears with a rough cotton handkerchief. She did not get up when she heard a low whistle, nor was she afraid when her lover came and gently kissed her wet eyelids.

Hay-time came round again. The lovers, each busy throughout the day, thought constantly of one another. He bought her a little ring with a blue stone in it, and she wore it all night long. He bought her, too, a wedding ring, but she could think of no safe place to hide it, and wore it tied round her middle with a piece of string. "You'll soon be wearing it," he told her confidently. "As soon as you're twenty-one—and perhaps before that—we're going to be married. I don't care how soon."

"And neither do I!" she answered joyfully. "I don't care, whatever happens."

There was just one thing they had forgotten. In late summer he caught a chill. A night passed, and he did not come; then two nights, three, four, five; and on the sixth she heard from her father that he was dead.

Tom Morris had come in and sat down at the table. He had seemed full of inward pleasure about something. He began to eat, and to talk to the womenfolk. "Yes," he said, "young Barr's dead. His mother's telling everybody that he's been out night after night wi' some lass or other, and caught his death of pneumonia."

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Tildy watched the movement of her father's jaw as he chewed his food and told the tale of her lover's death, with malice, with amusement. How much did he know as he told it? She rose abruptly from the table and went upstairs into her room. She stood near the window, looking out into the pale blue sky. There was a pink reflection from the sunset. She did not see it. She had not yet realized the full meaning of her father's words, only that something dreadful, unspeakable, had happened to her.

She heard the sound of footsteps and turned blindly to hold the door. She was too late, her mother had crept into the room. She put her hand on her daughter's hair and whispered, "Don't take on, Tildy, I say, don't take on."

The girl did not move. She said with difficulty, "Does father say he's dead?"

Her mother did not answer, only stroked the girl's hair.

"Is it true? Have *you* heard?" she asked sharply, watching her mother's eyes.

The older woman nodded. "I've known sin' dinner-time," she said.

The girl shook off her mother's hand.

A week later Tom Morris again went away. He had whistled and sung all the week long and did not appear to have a care in the world. As soon as he was gone the girl put on a long black coat of her mother's. It had great pouched sleeves and much material in it, and would have looked a caricature of a coat on anybody less scared and sad. Then she put on a black hat of her own.

"I'm going, mother," she said.

Her mother was manifestly afraid. "I s'll be that uneasy until you come back," she said. "Promise me, Tildy, you won't do anything rash. I wish I could come with you."

"Oh, mother, do come! Lock up and come. I daren't go without you. Put on your black shawl. We'll hurry back as soon as we've seen it. If you're not with me, I don't know what'll happen."

She had gathered a few late wild flowers, and, holding these tenderly in her hand, the girl went with her mother to the graveyard and saw her lover's grave. Her mother looked about to see that nobody was near as she hid her few blossoms close to the earth, beneath the conventional hot-house wreaths which were already withering. The pale yellow October sun, about to vanish behind a cloud, threw its last beams on the two women, who hurried through their sad task as if they were thieves at work. Then they stood up, and, with their faces hidden, turned towards home.

As they entered the yard, nothing was changed. The hens still flew heavily and protestingly into the branches at their approach, then out again. A cow lowed; then another, and another; and

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again the silence was deeper.

Tildy changed into her grey dress, tied the little fringed shawl over her head, and made the first of her trips from the well to the byre. As she carried the heavy buckets, she slowly lifted her gaze from the stony path beneath her feet until it rested among the stars.

She had not before realized that one could see so far.

* * *

THE BEAR WHO LET IT ALONE

In the woods of the Far West there once lived a brown bear who could take it or let it alone. He would go into a bar where they sold mead, a fermented drink made of honey, and he would have just two drinks. Then he would put some money on the bar and say, "See what the bears in the back room will have," and he would go home. But finally he took to drinking by himself most of the day. He would reel home at night, kick over the umbrella stand, knock down the reading lamps, and ram his elbows through the windows. Then he would collapse on the floor and lie there until he went to sleep. His wife was greatly distressed and his children were very frightened.

At length the bear saw the error of his ways and began to reform. In the end he became a famous teetotaller and a persistent temperance lecturer. He would tell everybody that came to his house about the awful effects of drink, and he would boast about how strong and well he had become since he gave up touching the stuff. To demonstrate this, he would stand on his head and on his hands and he would turn cartwheels in the house, kicking over the umbrella stand, knocking down the reading lamps, and ramming his elbows through the windows. Then he would lie down on the floor, tired by his healthful exercise, and go to sleep. His wife was greatly distressed and his children were very frightened.

Moral : You might as well fall flat on your face as lean over too far backwards.

JAMES THURBER

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KING OF THE NIGHT

All creatures feared Hush-wing—all except one

by CHETWOOD SCHWARZKOPF

IN the twilight of a redwood glen, Hush-wing, the great horned owl, watched dusk filter down with the setting sun. He was deep-chested and powerful—some two feet in height, with colour blends that varied from barred grey to whitish.

His eyes looked frontwards like those of a man—differing from all other birds—which, with his big tufted head, gave him an appearance of profundity he did not feel. For Hush-wing was baffled and disturbed.

To the owl, life was limited to three fundamentals: food, his mate, and the man-enemy. Food he understood, for that dealt with the primal want. But at present he was at cross-purposes with his mate. A new nesting place had to be found.

This dilemma had been forced upon Hush-wing by the one element in nature he feared and was unable to understand—the man-enemy.

Other creatures let him alone, or were in terror of him—but not man. Man meant death by traps and noise; dread dangers against which Hush-wing knew no recourse. And now man had taken away the tall redwood tree where he and his mate raised two or three fierce-eyed downy owlets each spring . . . had taken away all that part of the forest.

Hush-wing had chosen another nesting site at once. There was an eyrie high atop another redwood which he felt should belong to himself. Its owners were a pair of red-tail hawks quite his own size, but the owl knew he could rout them at will, day or night, and take over their citadel.

But Hush-wing's mate had rejected the hawks' nest, and decided upon a large hollow oak, high upon a ridge. She felt that this tree, isolated from the redwoods in the glen below, would provide better safety, for in some intuitive manner the female owl sensed that the man-enemy planned to destroy all the redwoods—even as that foe, given one chance, would destroy the owls.

Hush-wing brooded over the problem while the evensong of the day birds quieted down and ceased. Then he called. In the

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brush, far below, some small animal shuddered with a muted quiver as inaudible to most ears as a featherfall. To the owl's amplified hearing, the sound came clear as a twig snap. He peered down at it, but decided to let it go.

He hooted again, and from a nearby tree came an answer, higher pitched possibly, and with five notes instead of his own three. For several minutes the two owls called back and forth, always with Hush-wing's three notes, and his mate's answering five. Then he spread velvet-soft wings and, with the lightness of elfin silk, floated down to a pool where he lit upon a rock.

His mate stayed behind in the trees and called querulously for a time, but Hush-wing paid no attention. He waded into the water and drank from it thirstily. Then he settled down, ruffling and swishing his feathers as a chicken would take a dust bath.

An otter popped its head out of the water to watch. Hush-wing raised up and snapped his beak with a hollow clop-clop. Then the otter submerged.

A shadow floated out of the blue-dusk of the forest and dropped on to Hush-wing's vacated rock, soundless except for a touch of furred talons. For a moment, his mate poised there to watch Hush-wing emerge from the pool and preen himself. They bobbed heads at each other with a Jap-like gesture, then she stepped down into the water.

Hush-wing took off with a downbeat that made swirls in the sand, but with never a sound. He skimmed between the trees like a wraith, turning his lynx-like head to watch and listen. For now was the hunting hour.

In a few minutes he arrived at the hawks' nest, with a wood rat still twitching in his talons. He did not expect to find the hawks in possession, for their nesting time came later than his own. He landed and began to tear his prey apart. In the midst of his meal, a wing tip buffed him. His mate hovered overhead, cracking her beak. Her summons was not to be disobeyed. Hush-wing finished his breakfast in one gulp, crooning in appeasement. But she had gone.

He wiped his beak upon a sprig of growth and took to the air after her. The hour had come to settle the issue, he knew; for already the moon was young in the January sky, and with its wane would come the horned owls' nesting period.

When they arrived at the debated oak tree, Hush-wing circled it in indecision. But his mate alighted at the entrance to the hollow and peered inside with feathers fiercely on end, lest a trespasser be there. Satisfied that all was well, she looked up at her wilful spouse with a soft "crrooo?"

And with that, Hush-wing capitulated; for the female's choice

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in matters of residence was final. He alighted beside her and began a series of opera bouffe bows. He sidled up to her, whickering in sly surmise, but she had turned coy and looked away. He catapulted into the air and turned a somersault. Then he landed again, facing her, and raised every feather on end until he appeared twice his natural size. He stalked up to her like an aggressive rooster, and began chuckling.

For answer, his mate turned her back and hopped to another branch, as if bored. Hush-wing followed, prancing on his toes and fluttering. She nipped him in annoyance, causing several feathers to float away, and dropped into the hollow tree. For a moment, Hush-wing looked like a too-ardent swain that had been slapped in the face. Then he followed . . .

Later in the evening, when a frosty moon's beams slanted down the redwood aisles, Hush-wing began to hunt again. He was flying low between the trees, looking for creatures on the ground, when he felt a desire for trout. He swung over to the stream—to find a glare coming from his favourite pool. He ascended and alighted in a tree close by.

Down by the water's edge was a large fire. About it was a group of the man-enemies, making night unpleasant with their cries. During summer moons, the owl had learned to expect this. But now, with winter's arrival, he felt he should again own that pool with its fish.

A pair of man-enemies left the fire and walked towards Hush-wing's tree, making courtship sounds of their own. The owl felt worried and angry. Through his consciousness surged a hatred for these trespassers who, as he saw them, could only mean harm. He peered down and let out a groan of wrath, followed by a shriek that tore the air like a death-cry from outer darkness.

The result was immediate. The smaller of the pair of man-enemies screamed and dashed back to the fire. All the man-enemies began to gabble like excited chickens. A loud report shattered the forest's echoes. The owl took to his wings.

But when the man-enemies left a dying fire and disappeared after a time, Hush-wing felt vindicated. Once again the glen-valley with its stream was his alone. As a result, he was doubly outraged when he returned to the oak; for there he found a large male owl whickering at his mate, who was glaring from the hollow.

Hush-wing dived for the intruder, cracking his beak like a back-firing 'plane. But the foe was fashioned from seasoned sinew himself, and knew what he wanted. He rocketed upwards, to collide with Hush-wing in mid-air. The two big birds fell to the ground with talons interlocked, each pounding his wings and

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trying to destroy the other's eyes with his own steel-shears beak. The female remained in the entrance of the nest-to-be, tensed and watching. Had the enemy shown signs of winning, she would have gone to Hush-wing's aid; for they, like most owls, mated for life.

Hush-wing was fighting with the single-purpose concentration of threatened life. When, in time, an opening came, he struck deep into one of his enemy's crystalline-glowing eyes. That orb burst like a broken light globe. In its place gaped a shattered socket. Hush-wing drove for the remaining eye with maddened strength, lusting to smash through into the brain behind.

But the intruder had had enough. He began to twist and squirm, averting his head and racing his wings until he got himself into the air . . . whereupon Hush-wing let go and launched an aerial attack. Banking and diving, he drove his recent rival across the glen-valley and away. After a tour of inspection, he put back to the oak, where he gave his mate a vigorous nip for general discipline's sake.

Now that their new home was established, the female owl no longer stayed in the redwoods down in the glen. Possibly to insure possession, but more probably to keep her mate mindful of her, she began to sleep in the hollow oak by day—although it would be a fortnight before the first large white egg was laid.

On rainy days, Hush-wing stayed in the hollow with her; but more often he slept outside, where he was awakened from time to time by his acute hearing. He did not yet trust this place, for always he had lived deep in the redwoods, and, by comparison, the oak seemed dangerously exposed.

At the lower end of Hush-wing's glen-valley, the hills came close together. The stream foamed through a narrow gorge and slowed down in a valley beyond. In this place, a colony of the man-enemies lived. Hush-wing knew their farms of old—and knew where they kept their chickens. For the most part, however, these birds seemed to live in inaccessible dwellings. But now and then an unwary chicken would roost in a tree, or a door would be left open.

This was on Hush-wing's mind one black and storm-blown night. His mate already had laid her eggs, three in number. He had taken her place on the nest to let her go out and hunt. But a downpour was falling, and she soon returned, hungry and wet. This was not good, Hush-wing felt, although poor hunting always came with the rain time. He decided to go down to the man-enemies' valley and bring back a chicken for his mate and himself to enjoy in the dryness of their hollow tree. He was beginning to

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forget the hawks' nest now, and accepted the benefits of shelter as his due.

He left the nest and flew out into the storm. In a matter of minutes he was over the man-enemies' valley, heading for the farm where he had had good hunting in the past. This place seemed different from the rest. Only one man-enemy appeared to belong there, instead of a family. This man-enemy was quiet and his surroundings were more like the woods. Also, if there were chickens about, some might be found in trees instead of hiding in coops.

He alighted in a tree near the yard to reconnoitre. But no chickens were roosting there, and the place seemed deserted and storm-lashed. A single light shone from the little drab-coloured dwelling of the man-enemy.

But the door to an unpainted barn was open. From it came a chorus of subdued sounds, audible even above the wind. Hush-wing never had ventured into that barn because it looked like a man-enemy's dwelling. But the noises interested him. He shifted to a tall fence post on the barn's lee side, the better to appraise the situation.

For a time, he sat statue-like on his new watch-post. Then, hungry and audacious, he floated silently through the open door to look. A cat that had been groping for mice in the hay left in a scared hurry.

Hush-wing circled in and out of the barn several times before deciding to land on a rafter. At first, he listened with the guilty alertness of a burglar. A flock of chickens were roosting along a cross-beam. Although they could neither see nor hear the owl, they were becoming restless. One of them let out an alarm note. Hush-wing could hear its heart-beat quicken when he left his perch and floated over it. He seized the cackler, severed its head with one bite, and shot out into the storm with the flopping carcass.

A hubbub of squawking broke loose in the barn. A dog began to bark. In the man-enemy's dwelling, the light brightened.

For several days after that, Hush-wing let the chickens alone. Then, on a breathless overcast night when nothing seemed about, he decided to bring in another. All appeared quiet at the farm. The barn door still gaped open, unlike most chicken hiding places. But age-old owl ritual decreed that he listen and observe before acting.

He alighted on his watch-post with the silence of dewfall, and —snap !—something seized his ankle as no foe ever had gripped him before. He leaped with a beat of great wings, but the post hung

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on. He bit in fury at the thing that had hold of him, but it was as cold and unyielding as rock. Again and again he struck at it, until his beak was chipped and his tongue bleeding. The dog began to bark.

Hush-wing's rage was turning to panic. For once, there seemed nothing he could do. A light had come from the man-enemy's dwelling and was moving towards him.

Two man-enemies arrived at the post. They shone a searing beam up into Hush-wing's face. He felt his eyes ache with shock as their sensitive irises constricted. He swelled his feathers to fantastic proportions and lunged down at them, snapping his beak in a bloody froth from his injured tongue.

One of the man-enemies laughed. "Well, your squirrel trap did the trick, all right. He's a tough customer, eh?"

"They all are," said the other. "Ain't nothing worse. You sure you want him? I'd sooner kill him right off."

"You bet I want him!" replied the visitor. "I'll take him back to town. Bring-'em-back-alive; that's me. Ha-ha!"

Hush-wing sensed that the man-enemies were undecided in some manner, but to his mind that meant only how they were going to kill him. So when one of them reached up and took hold of a wing tip, he tried as never before to get at his captors. He cracked his beak with tommy-gun speed and lunged backwards and forwards. But the trap was well fastened to the top of the post, and it held him helpless.

"Now," said the man-enemy who had hold of the big owl's wing, "you grab hold of his other tip like I've done, and I'll press down on the trap spring with this hoe. An' hold fast when he pulls loose, or he'll come down on top of me. Watch yourself!"

In a matter of moments, Hush-wing found himself being carried by spreadeagled wings, with his body dangling puppet-like between. And twist and threaten though he might, the man-enemies held him as they wanted. They opened the end of a small building and tossed him into it.

Hush-wing did not even touch the floor. With one surge of his great wings, he flung himself towards the open . . . and struck something that resembled an age-coated spider web, but which was strong beyond understanding. He clung to it, beating his wings, while his captors watched outside. After a time he let go and dropped to the floor, blinking into the light with pupils shrunk to dot size. But when the man-enemies came closer, he hurled himself against the barrier and challenged them to fight to the end, as noblesse primeval should.

"Think we can tame him?" asked the one who wanted him alive.

"Never in a million years," replied the other. "You've got

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to get 'em pretty young for that, an' even then it's darned near impossible."

"Here," said the first man-enemy. "I'll bet he's got a nest somewhere in these hills, eh?"

"Most likely," replied his host. "Why don't you try an' find it an' get yourself a young un to take home? Then we can kill this one."

"Good idea," approved the city man. "Know any places to look?"

"Yeh, I think so. An' I'll help you."

Ten days passed, and Hush-wing was slowly dying. Although the man-enemies brought food in abundance, he scorned most of it. Even the water they set out seemed hateful, and he drank little. During the nights, he tried ceaselessly to find a way to get through that strong web. Time and again he searched every part of his prison in futility. Daylight would find him exhausted and withdrawn into the darkest corner—but always ready to fight if the man-enemies came near. And in front of him, in full view, was freedom—the woods and hills—with only that heart-breaking baffle between.

Early the tenth night a subdued five-noted call sounded nearby. Hush-wing answered instantly, and his mate alighted on the ground in front of the cage. But theirs was no joyous reunion. That same day, the man-enemies had discovered the hollow oak. They had tried to climb to the nest, but she attacked them so savagely in the oncoming dusk that they had left, after shouting and throwing missiles.

Daylight would bring them back with the danger-that-kills-by-noise; she knew. Hush-wing trembled with weakness and rage as he became aware of his mate's extremity.

He flung himself at one corner of the web which had seemed to weaken in recent nights. His mate watched at first. Then she seized it from the outside with her talons. From where she was the leverage was better—and she was stronger than Hush-wing. A staple pulled out, and a corner of the wire peeled back a little. Hush-wing tried at once to push his head through the opening, but it was too small. He struggled in frenzy for a time—to give up, exhausted.

By now, his mate seemed to have decided this strange web had a vulnerable point. She was attacking the corner with much buffeting of wings, biting at the curled wire, when the man-enemy's dog heard her, and arrived barking.

Hush-wing's mate took to the air, dived on to him, and raked his back with her talons. The dog fled for the house, yelping. Out

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hurried the man-enemies with lights. The female owl circled overhead and flew away.

The men were puzzled.

"I can't figure what kind ō' varmint done it," the dog's owner said, examining his pet's wounds. "We'd better take him inside and fix him up. How's the owl?"

"Oh, he's all right. Looks half dead," said the city man, who had glanced into Hush-wing's cage. "I'll be glad when we can kill him tomorrow. If we'd just had a gun at that nest tree tonight——"

"We'll fill her with lead first thing in the morning," his host promised grimly. "They can't see nothin' in the daytime."

For a while, the two men poked about the premises. Then they went back into the house, taking the dog.

Not long after the door closed, Hush-wing's mate returned. But they seemed to have lost their co-ordination now, and see-sawed back and forth, with Hush-wing tottering at times.

After a lapse of futility, his attention focused once more upon the peeled-back corner of the wire. Again he tried to push through. His mate watched until he gave up, panting with weakness. Then, as if inspired, she seized the wire's end with one talon, braced herself, and pulled with all her strength.

A piece of rotting wood gave way . . . and with it, a foot of netting.

For a moment, both birds were startled by the enlarged opening they had made. Then Hush-wing came to life with a burst of reserve strength. He dived into the gap and struggled through, losing a few feathers in his hurry, and leapt into the air . . . free.

With never a glance behind, the pair of owls soared away into the night.

The first thing Hush-wing wanted was food. A half-mile back in the hills, he spied a large weasel. He swooped and killed it with a single blow. A renewed strength pulsed into his starved body with each bite of warm, pungent flesh. He took to the air on freshened wings, and headed for the nest. On the way, he picked up a wood rat.

He arrived at the nest to find his mate already there. She had brought back a small duck in an unwitting gesture against man-enemies and their possessions. Two balls of white down, with great eyes and absurdly oversize feet, were bickering over their meal.

But the third egg lay cold where it had been pushed into a corner of the nest. Nor was it ever destined to hatch, for owls lay their eggs a few days apart but start setting as soon as the first one appears. And this final egg had been neglected too often by

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the remaining partner while she hunted.

For a time, the pair of owls watched their broodlings and felt content to be together. Then a soundless accord passed between them. Hush-wing took off across the glen-valley to the redwood tree with the hawks' nest. He found the eyrie not yet occupied, although it had been lined with new feathers and repaired. After a detailed inspection, and ridding it of the feathers, he returned to the oak.

Tenderly his mate picked up one of the pair of fledglings in her talons. Hush-wing took the other with a grip now like furred cushions; and away they flew. In a matter of minutes, nest-keeping had been set up in their new home.

In the early dawn, Hush-wing sat beside the hawks' former nest. Again he was king in command of his domain, and in the abode of his choice.

That he had been the cause of all the trouble—and that this might be only an interlude—was beyond his intelligence. All he knew was that he had had much to eat during the night, and rejoiced in the feel of vibrant energy that was recharging his battered but strong-knit body. In a few minutes now, he would hunt up those hawks and drive them from his redwood retreat for ever—a fitting climax.

And in the deserted hollow oak, there remained only a cold and dead egg for the man-enemies in the morning.

* * *

SUCCESS STORY

Both the photographer and the mother had failed to make the restless little four-year-old sit still long enough to have her picture taken.

Finally the photographer suggested that the "little darling" might be quiet if her mother would leave the room for a few minutes. During her absence the picture was taken successfully. On the way home the mother asked, "What did the nice man say to make mother's little darling sit still?"

"He thed, 'You thit thtill, you little newthunth, or I'll knock your block off,' tho I that thtill," she explained.

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CRADLE SONG

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest
Now is the time that face should form another

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

I see my lover
Striding with his horses
Up to the skyline
Afield at the plough,
With the furrow breaking
Wrinkled behind him,
The smell in his nostrils
And the sweat on his brow . . .

So strong, so comely ;
And I am his woman.
O hasten twilight
And darken the land ;
For my breasts are heavy
Like fruits in the orchard
That wait through October
For the harvester's hand.

And, blood, be patient !
He shall leave his labour
When dusk is eating
At the sunset's bloom :
His kisses shall course thee
From mouth to bosom,
He shall answer thy yearning
At the heart and the womb.

EDWARD DAVISON

Comfort and Joy

Rabbi Idi said : " There was a woman in Sidon, who lived ten years with her husband, and had borne no child. They went to Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, and asked to be divorced. He said to them, ' As your coming together was with a banquet, so let your separation be with a banquet.' They agreed, and made for themselves a holiday and banquet, and she made her husband drink

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more than enough. When his mind returned to him, he said to her, 'My daughter, see what is most precious to you in my house, and take it, and go to your father's house.'

"What did she do? When he had gone to sleep, she beckoned to her servants and handmaids, and said to them, 'Carry him on the mattress to my father's house.' In the middle of the night, he woke up and said to her, 'Whither have I been brought?' She said, 'To the house of my father.' He said to her, 'But why?'

"She replied, 'Did you not tell me last night to take what was most precious to me from your house and to go with it to the house of my father? There is nothing in the world more precious to me than you.'

"After that they went back to Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, and he prayed for them, and they were given a child."

SHIR HA-SHIRIM RABBAH, *from the Midrash, translated by* LEWIS BROWNE

Sing Lullaby

Sing lullaby, as women doe,
Wherewith they bring their babes to rest;
And lullaby can I sing too,
As womanly as can the best.
With lullaby they still the childe,
And if I be not much beguil'd,
Full many wanton babes have I,
Which must be still'd with lullaby.

GEORGE GASCOIGNE, 1525-1577

From Which, at Times, Heaven Preserve Us

God good in preserving An in a milke bowle, and Jane from swouning who let her fall in, and John in falling from ye top of ye schoole staires; God give his angels charge over us.

THE REV. RALPH JOSSELIN, *Diary, September*, 1653

S.O.S.

Dear friend, I am a widower with two little girls, and I want someone to take care of them. I think we could live very comfortably together in this world, and afterwards we could rejoin those we have loved who have gone before . . .

From a letter proposing marriage, 1875

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Filial Piety in Babylon—

In lyke wyse was somtyme a kynge in babiloine that was named Evilmerodach a Jolye man with oute Justice and so cruell that he dyde do hewe his faders body in thre honderd pieces And gaf hit to ete and devour to thre honderd birdes that men calle vultres.

Author Unknown
Caxton's Game and Playe of the Chesse, 1474

—and in China

Tseng Ts'an (506-437 B.C.) . . . when touring a remote part of the countryside, came at sunset to a village. Being extremely tired, hungry and thirsty, he was preparing to enter it and sample at the inn the best fare the place provided, but before doing so enquired, with his usual caution, what might be its name. When they told him it was called Better-than-Mother, he immediately turned away and, though the temperature was below freezing point, camped for the night in a turnip field.

This action was not only what is now termed a gesture; he had, in fact, little alternative, for it was well known that he had divorced his wife for having served up to his mother a dish of badly stewed pears.

MAURICE COLLIS, *The Extremities of Filial Piety*

Balow, La-low

Balow, my babe, lie still and sleep!
It grieves me sore to see thee weep.
Wouldst thou be quiet I'se be glad,
Thy mourning makes my sorrow sad:
Balow my boy, thy mother's joy,
Thy father breeds me great annoy—
Balow, la-low!

I cannot choose but ever will
Be loving to thy father still;
Where'er he go, where'er he ride,
My love with him doth still abide;
In weal or woe, where'er he go,
My heart shall ne'er depart him fro—
Balow, la-low!

Author Unknown, Sixteenth Century

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★*Last month we left Horatio Hornblower safely aboard the 'Indefatigable' after his first taste of commando tactics on alien soil. But now Midshipman Hornblower meets a new enemy; he fights, for the first time, not just as a servant of the King, but as a man enraged; and in the end he discovers something worth remembering—*

HORNBLOWER AND THE SPANISH GALLEYS

by C. S. FORESTER

THE old *Indefatigable* was lying at anchor in the Bay of Cadiz at the time when Spain made peace with France. Hornblower happened to be midshipman of the watch, and it was he who called the attention of Lieutenant Chadd to the approach of the eight-oared pinnace, with the red and yellow of Spain drooping at the stern. Chadd's glass made out the gleam of gold on epaulette and cocked hat, and bellowed the order for sideboys and marine guard to give the traditional honours to a Captain in an allied service. Pellew, hurriedly warned, was at the gangway to meet his visitor, and it was at the gangway that the entire interview took place. The Spaniard, making a low bow with his hat across his stomach, offered a sealed envelope to the Englishman.

"Here, Mr. Hornblower," said Pellew, holding the letter unopened. "Speak French to this fellow. Ask him to come below for a glass of wine."

But the Spaniard, with a further bow, declined the refreshment, and, with another bow, requested that Pellew open the letter immediately. Pellew broke the seal and read the contents, struggling with the French which he could read to a small extent although he could not speak it at all. He handed it to Hornblower.

"This means the Dagoes have made peace, doesn't it?"

Hornblower struggled through twelve lines of compliments addressed by His Excellency the Duke of Belchite (Grandee of the First Class, with eighteen other titles ending with Captain-General of Andalusia) to the Most Gallant Ship-Captain Sir Edward Pellew, Knight of the Bath. The second paragraph was short and contained only a brief intimation of peace. The third paragraph was as long as the first, and repeated its phraseology almost word for word in a ponderous farewell.

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"That's all, sir," said Hornblower.

But the Spanish Captain had a verbal message with which to supplement the written one.

"Please tell your captain," he said, in his lisping Spanish-French, "that now as a neutral power Spain must enforce her rights. You have already been at anchor here for twenty-four hours. Six hours from now"—the Spaniard took a gold watch from his pocket and glanced at it—"if you are within range of the batteries at Puntales there they will be given orders to fire on you."

Hornblower could only translate the brutal message without any attempt at softening it, and Pellew listened, white with anger despite his tan.

"Tell him—" he began, and then mastered his rage. "Damme if I'll let him see he has made me angry."

He put his hat across his stomach and bowed in as faithful an imitation of the Spaniard's courtliness as he could manage, before he turned to Hornblower.

"Tell him I have received his message with pleasure. Tell him I much regret that circumstances are separating him from me, and that I hope I shall always enjoy his personal friendship whatever the relations between our countries. Tell him—oh, you can tell him the sort of thing I want said, can't you, Hornblower? Let's see him over the side with dignity. Sideboys! Bosun's mates! Drummers!"

Hornblower poured out compliments to the best of his ability, and at every phrase the two captains exchanged bows, the Spaniard withdrawing a pace at each bow and Pellew following him up, not to be outdone in courtesy. The drums beat a ruffle, the marines presented arms, the pipes shrilled and twittered until the Spaniard's head had descended to the level of the maindeck, when Pellew stiffened up, clapped his hat on his head, and swung round on his First Lieutenant.

"Mr. Eccles, I want to be under way within the hour, if you please."

Then he stamped down below to regain his equanimity in private.

Hands were aloft loosing sail ready to sheet home, while the clank of the capstan told how other men were heaving the cable short, and Hornblower was standing on the portside gangway with Mr. Wales the carpenter, looking over at the white houses of one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

"I've been ashore there twice," said Wales. "The wine's good—vino, they calls it—if you happens to like that kind o' muck. But don't you ever try that brandy, Mr. Hornblower. Poison, it is, rank poison. Hello! We're going to have an escort, I see."

Two long sharp prows had emerged from the inner bay, and

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were pointing towards the *Indefatigable*. Hornblower could not restrain himself from giving a cry of surprise as he followed Wales' gaze. The vessels approaching were galleys; along each side of them the oars were lifting and falling rhythmically, catching the sunlight as they feathered. The effect, as a hundred oars swung like one, was perfectly beautiful. Hornblower remembered a line in a Latin poem which he had translated as a schoolboy, and recalled his surprise when he discovered that to a Roman the "white wings" of a ship of war were her oars. Now the simile was plain; even a gull in flight, which Hornblower had always looked upon until now as displaying the perfection of motion, was not more beautiful than those galleys.

They lay low in the water, immensely long for their beam. Neither the sails nor the lateen yards were set on the low raking masts. The bows blazed with gilding while the waters of the bay foamed round them as they headed into the teeth of the gentle breeze with the Spanish red and gold streaming aft from the mast-head. Up—forward—down—went the oars with unchanging rhythm, the blades not varying an inch in their distance apart during the whole of the stroke. From the bows of each, two long guns looked straight forward in the direction the galleys pointed.

"Twenty-four pounders," said Wales. "If they catch you in a calm they'll knock you to pieces. Lie off on your quarter where you can't bring a gun to bear and rake you till you strike. An' then God help you—better a Turkish prison than a Spanish one."

In a line-ahead that might have been drawn with a ruler and measured with a chain the galleys passed close along the port side of the *Indefatigable* and went ahead of her. As they passed the roll of the drum and the call of the pipes summoned the crew of the *Indefatigable* to attention out of compliment to the flag and the commission pendant going by, while the galley's officers returned the salute.

"It don't seem right, somehow," muttered Wales under his breath, "to salute 'em like they was a frigate."

Level with the *Indefatigable*'s bowsprit the leader backed her starboard side oars, and spun like a top, despite her length and narrow beam, across the frigate's bows. The gentle wind blew straight to the frigate from the galley, and then from her consort as the latter followed; and a foul stench came back on the air and assailed Hornblower's nostrils, and not Hornblower's alone, clearly, for it brought forth cries of disgust from all the men on deck.

"They all stink like that," explained Wales. "Four men to the oar an' fifty oars. Two hundred galley slaves, that is. All chained to their benches. When you goes aboard one of them as a slave you're chained to your bench, an' you're never unchained until

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they drop you overside. Sometimes when the hands aren't busy they'll hose out the bilge, but that doesn't happen often, bein' Dagoes an' not many of 'em."

Hornblower as always sought exact information.

"How many, Mr. Wales?"

"Thirty, mebbe. Enough to hand the sails if they're making a passage. Or to man the guns—they strike the yards and sails, like now, before they goes into action, Mr. Hornblower," said Wales, pontifical as usual, and with that slight emphasis on the 'Mister' inevitable when a warrant officer of sixty with no hope of further promotion addressed a warrant officer of eighteen (his nominal equal in rank) who might some day be an admiral. "So you see how it is. With no more than thirty of a crew an' two hundred slaves they daren't let 'em loose, not ever."

The galleys had turned again, and were now passing down the *Indefatigable*'s starboard side. The beat of the oars had slowed very noticeably, and Hornblower had ample time to observe the vessels closely, the low forecastle and high poop with the gangway connecting them along the whole length of the galley; upon that gangway walked a man with a whip. The rowers were invisible below the bulwarks, the oars being worked through holes in the sides, closed as far as Hornblower could see, with sheets of leather round the oar-looms to keep out the sea. On the poop stood two men at the tiller and a small group of officers, their gold lace flashing in the sunshine.

Save for the gold lace and the two twenty-four pounder bow chasers Hornblower was looking at exactly the same sort of vessel as the ancients used to fight their battles. Polybius and Thucydides wrote about galleys almost identical with these—for that matter it was not much more than two hundred years since the galleys had fought their last great battle at Lepanto against the Turks. But those battles had been fought with hundreds of galleys a side.

"How many do they have in commission now?" asked Hornblower.

"A dozen, mebbe—not that I knows for sure, o' course. Carthagena's their usual station, beyond the Gut."

Wales, as Hornblower understood, meant by this through the straight of Gibraltar in the Mediterranean.

"Too frail for the Atlantic," Hornblower commented.

It was easy to deduce the reasons for the survival of this small number—the innate conservatism of the Spaniards would account for it to a large extent. Then there was the point that condemnation to the galleys was one way of disposing of criminals. And when all was said and done a galley might still be useful in a calm—merchant ships becalmed while trying to pass the Strait of Gibraltar might

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be snapped up by galleys pushing out from Cadiz or Carthagena. And at the very lowest estimate there might be some employment for galleys to tow vessels in and out of harbour with the wind unfavourable.

" Mr. Hornblower ! " said Eccles. " My respects to the Captain, and we're ready to get under weigh."

Hornblower dived below with his message.

" My compliments to Mr. Eccles," said Pellew, looking up from his desk, " and I'll be on deck immediately."

There was just enough of a southerly breeze to enable the *Indefatigable* to weather the point in safety. With her anchor catted she braced round her yards and began to steal seaward ; in the disciplined stillness which prevailed the sound of the ripple of water under her cutwater was clearly to be heard—a musical note which told nothing, in its innocence, of the savagery and danger of the world of the sea into which she was entering. Creeping along under her topsail the *Indefatigable* made no more than three knots, and the galleys came surging past her again, oars beating their fastest rhythm, as if the galleys were boasting of their independence of the elements. Their gilt flashed in the sun as they overtook to windward, and once again their foul stench offended the nostrils of the men of the *Indefatigable*.

" I'd be obliged if they'd keep to leeward of us," muttered Pellew, watching them through his glass. " But I suppose that's not Spanish courtesy. Mr. Cutler ! "

" Sir ! " said the gunner.

" You may commence the salute."

" Aye aye, sir."

The forward carronade on the lee side roared out the first of its compliments, and the fort of Puntales began its reply. The sound of the salutes rolled round the beautiful bay ; nation was speaking to nation in all courtesy.

" The next time we hear those guns they'll be shotted, I fancy," said Pellew, gazing across at Puntales and the flag of Spain flying above it.

Indeed, the tide of war was turning against England. Nation after nation had retired from the contest against France, some worsted by arms and some by the diplomacy of the vigorous young republic. To any thinking mind it was obvious that once the step from war to neutrality had been taken, the next step would be easy, from neutrality to war on the other side. Hornblower could foresee, close at hand, a time when all Europe would be arrayed in hostility to England, when she would be battling for her life against the rejuvenescent power of France and the malignity of the whole world.

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"Set sail, please, Mr. Eccles," said Pellew.

Two hundred trained pairs of legs raced aloft; two hundred trained pairs of arms let loose the canvas, and the *Indefatigable* doubled her speed, heeling slightly to the gentle breeze. Now she was meeting the long Atlantic swell. So were the galleys; as the *Indefatigable* overtook them Hornblower could see the leader put her nose into a long roller so that a cloud of spray broke over her forecastle. That was asking too much of such frail craft. Back went one bank of oars; forward went the other. The galleys rolled hideously for a moment in the trough of the sea before they completed their turn and headed back for the safe waters of Cadiz Bay.

Someone forward in the *Indefatigable* began to boo, and the cry was instantly taken up through the ship. A storm of boos and whistles and catcalls pursued the galleys, the men momentarily quite out of hand while Pellew spluttered with rage on the quarter-deck and the petty officers strove in vain to take the names of the offenders. It was an ominous farewell to Spain.

Ominous indeed. It was not long before Captain Pellew gave the news to the ship that Spain had completed her change-over; with the treasure convoy safely in she had declared war against England; the revolutionary republic had won the alliance of the most decayed monarchy in Europe. British resources were now stretched to the utmost; there was another thousand miles of coast to watch, another fleet to blockade, another horde of privateers to guard against, and far fewer harbours in which to take refuge and from which to draw the fresh water and the meagre stores which enabled the hard-worked crews to remain at sea.

It was then that friendship had to be cultivated with the half savage Barbary States, and the insolence of the Beys and the Sultans had to be tolerated so that North Africa could provide the skinny bullocks and the barley grain to feed the British garrisons in the Mediterranean—all of them beleaguered on land—and the ships which kept open the way to them. Oran, Tetuan, Algiers wallowed in unwontedly honest prosperity with the influx of British gold.

It was a day of glassy calm in the Straits of Gibraltar. The sea was like a silver shield, the sky like a bowl of sapphire, with the mountains of Africa on the one hand, the mountains of Spain on the other as dark serrations on the horizon. It was not a comfortable situation for the *Indefatigable*, but that was not because of the blazing sun which softened the pitch in the deck seams.

There is almost always a slight current setting inwards into the Mediterranean from the Atlantic, and the prevailing winds blow in

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the same direction. In a calm like this it was not unusual for a ship to be carried far through the Straits, past the Rock of Gibraltar, and then to have to beat for days and even weeks to make Gibraltar Bay. So that Pellew was not unnaturally anxious about his convoy of grain ships from Oran.

Gibraltar had to be revictualled—Spain had already marched an army up for the siege—and he dared not risk being carried past his destination. His orders to his reluctant convoy had been enforced by flag and gun signals, for no shorthanded merchant ship relished the prospect of the labour Pellew wished to be executed. The *Indefatigable* no less than her convoy had lowered boats and the helpless ships were now all in tow. That was backbreaking, exhausting labour, the men at the oars tugging and straining, dragging the oar blades through the water, while the towlines tightened and bucked with superhuman perversity and the ships sheered freakishly from side to side.

It was less than a mile an hour that the ships made in this fashion, at the cost of the complete exhaustion of the boats' crews, but at least it postponed the time when the Gibraltar current would carry them to leeward, and similarly gave more chance for the longed-for southerly wind—two hours of a southerly wind was all they wished for—to waft them up to the Mole.

Down in the *Indefatigable*'s longboat and cutter the men tugging at their oars were so stupefied with their toil that they did not hear the commotion in the ship. They were just tugging and straining, under the pitiless sky, living through their two hours' spell of misery, but they were roused by the voice of the Captain himself, hailing them from the forecastle.

"Mr. Bolton! Mr. Chadd! Cast off there, if you please. You'd better come and arm your men at once. Here come our friends from Cadiz."

Back on the quarterdeck Pellew looked through his glass at the hazy horizon; he could make out from here by now what had first been reported from the masthead.

"They're heading straight for us," he said.

The two galleys were on their way from Cadiz; presumably a fast horseman from the lookout point at Tarifa had brought them the news of this golden opportunity, of the flat calm and the scattered and helpless convoy. This was the moment for galleys to justify their continued existence. They could capture and at least burn, although they could not hope to carry off, the unfortunate merchant ships while the *Indefatigable* lay helpless hardly out of cannon's range. Pellew looked round at the two merchant ships and the three brigs; one of them was within half a mile of him and might be covered by his gunfire, but the others—a mile and a

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half, two miles away—had no such protection.

"Pistols and cutlasses, my lads!" he said to the men pouring up from overside. "Clap onto that stay tackle now. Smartly with that carronade, Mr. Cutler!"

The *Indefatigable* had been in too many expeditions where minutes counted to waste any time over these preparations. The boats' crews seized their arms, the six-pounder carronades were lowered into the bows of the cutter and longboat, and soon the boats, crowded with armed men, and provisioned against sudden emergency, were pulling away to meet the galleys.

"What the devil d'you think you're doing, Mr. Hornblower?"

Pellew had just caught sight of Hornblower in the act of swinging out the jolly boat which was his special charge. He wondered what his midshipman thought he could achieve against a war-galley with a twelve foot boat and a crew of six.

"We can pull to one of the convoy and reinforce the crew, sir," said Hornblower.

"Oh, very well then, carry on. I'll trust to your good sense even though that's a broken reed."

"Good on you, sir!" said Jackson ecstatically, as the jolly boat shoved off from the frigate. "Good on you! No one else wouldn't never have thought of that."

Jackson, the coxswain of the jolly boat, obviously thought that Hornblower had no intention of carrying out his suggestion to reinforce the crew of one of the merchant ships.

"Those stinking Dagoes," said stroke oar, between his teeth.

Hornblower was conscious of the presence in his crew of the same feeling of violent hostility towards the Spanish galleys as he felt within himself. In a fleeting moment of analysis he attributed it to the circumstances in which they had first made the galleys' acquaintance, as well as to the stench which the galleys trailed after them. He had never known this feeling of personal hatred before; when previously he had fought it had been as a servant of the King, not out of personal animosity. Yet here he was gripping the tiller under the scorching sky and leaning forward in his eagerness to be at actual grips with this enemy.

The longboat and cutter had a long start of them, and even though they were manned by crews who had already served a spell at the oars they were skimming over the water at such a speed that the jolly boat with all the advantage of glassy-smooth water only caught slowly up to them. Overside the sea was of the bluest, deepest blue until the oar blades churned it white. Ahead of them the vessels of the convoy lay scattered where the sudden calm had caught them, and just beyond them Hornblower caught sight of the flash of oar blades as the galleys came sweeping down on their prey.

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Longboat and cutter were diverging in an endeavour to cover as many vessels as possible, and the gig was still far astern. There would hardly be time to board a ship even if Hornblower should wish to. He put the tiller over to incline his course after the cutter; one of the galleys at that moment abruptly made its appearance in the gap between two of the merchant ships. Hornblower saw the cutter swing round to point her six-pounder carronade at the advancing bows.

"Pull, you men! Pull!" he shrieked, mad with excitement.

He could not imagine what was going to happen, but he wanted to be in the fray. That six-pounder popgun was grossly inaccurate at any range longer than musket shot. It would serve to hurl a mass of grape into a crowd of men, but its ball would have small effect on the strengthened bows of a war galley.

"Pull!" shrieked Hornblower again. He was nearly up to them, wide on the cutter's quarter.

The carronade boomed out. Hornblower thought he saw the splinters fly from the galley's bow, but the shot had no more effect on deterring her than a peashooter could stop a charging bull. The galley turned a little, getting exactly into line, and then her oars' beat quickened. She was coming down to ram, like the Greeks at Salamis.

"Pull!" shrieked Hornblower.

Instinctively he gave the tiller a touch to take the jolly boat out into a flanking position.

"Easy!"

The jolly boat's oars stilled, as their way carried them past the cutter. Hornblower could see Soames standing up in the sternsheets looking at the death which was cleaving the blue water towards him. Bow to bow the cutter might have stood a chance, but too late the cutter tried to evade the blow altogether. Hornblower saw her turn, presenting her vulnerable side to the galley's stem. That was all he could see, for the next moment the galley herself hid from him the final act of the tragedy. The jolly boat's starboard side oars only just cleared the galley's starboard oars as she swept by. Hornblower heard a shriek and a crash, saw the galley's forward motion almost cease at the collision. He was mad with the lust of fighting, quite insane, and his mind was working with the rapidity of insanity.

"Give way, port!" he yelled, and the jolly boat swung round under the galley's stern. "Give way all!"

The jolly boat leaped after the galley like a terrier after a bull.

"Grapple them, damn you, Jackson!"

Jackson shouted an oath in reply as he leaped forward, seemingly hurdling the men at the oars without breaking their stroke. In the

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bows Jackson seized the boat's grapnel on its long line and flung it hard and true. It caught somewhere in the elaborate gilt rail on the galley's quarter. Jackson hauled on the line, the oars tugged madly in the effort to carry the jolly boat up to the galley's stern.

At that moment Hornblower saw it, the sight which would long haunt his dreams—up from under the galley's stern came the shattered forepart of the cutter, still with men clinging to it who had survived the long passage under the whole length of the galley which had overrun them. There were straining faces, empurpled faces, faces already relaxing in death. But in a moment it was past and gone, and Hornblower felt the jerk transmitted through the line to the jolly boat as the galley leaped forward.

"I can't hold her!" shouted Jackson.

"Take a turn round the cleat, you fool!"

The galley was towing the jolly boat now, dragging her along at the end of a twenty foot line close on her quarter, just clear of the arc of her rudder. The white water bubbled all round her, her bows were covered up with the strain. It was a mad moment, as though they had harpooned a whale. Some one came running aft on the Spaniard's poop, knife in hand to cut the line.

"Shoot him, Jackson!" shrieked Hornblower again.

Jackson's pistol cracked, and the Spaniard fell to the deck out of sight—a good shot. Despite his fighting madness, despite the turmoil of rushing water and glaring sun, Hornblower tried to think out his next move. Inclination and common sense alike told him that the best plan was to close with the enemy despite the odds.

"Pull up to them, there!" he shouted—everyone in the boat was shouting and yelling. The man in the bows of the jolly boat faced forward and took the grapnel line and began to haul in on it, but the speed of the boat through the water made any progress difficult, and after a yard or so had been gained the difficulty became insurmountable, for the grapnel was caught in the poop rail ten or eleven feet above water, and the angle of pull became progressively steeper as the jolly boat neared the stern of the galley. The boat's bow cocked higher out of the water than ever.

"Belay!" said Hornblower, and then, his voice rising again, "Out pistols, lads!"

A row of four or five swarthy faces had appeared at the stern rail of the galley. Muskets were pointing into the jolly boat, and there was a brief but furious exchange of shots. One man fell groaning into the bottom of the jolly boat, but the row of faces disappeared. Standing up precariously in the swaying stern sheets Hornblower could still see nothing of the galley's poop deck save for the tops of two heads, belonging, it was clear, to the men at the tiller.

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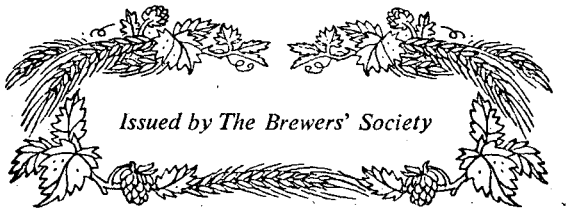

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" Reload," he said to his men, remembering by a miracle to give the order. The ramrods went down the pistol barrels.

" Do that carefully if you ever want to see Pompey again," said Hornblower.

He was shaking with excitement and mad with the fury of fighting, and it was the automatic, drilled part of him which was giving these levelheaded orders. His higher faculties were quite negatived by his lust for blood. He was seeing things through a pink mist—that was how he remembered it when he looked back upon it later. There was a sudden crash of glass. Someone had thrust a musket barrel through the big stern window of the galley's after cabin. Luckily having thrust it through he had to recover himself to take aim. An irregular volley of pistols almost coincided with the report of the musket. Where the Spaniard's bullet went no one knew; but the Spaniard fell back from the window.

" By God! That's our way! " screamed Hornblower, and then, steadying himself, " Reload."

As the bullets were being spat into the barrels he stood up. His unused pistols were still in his belt; his cutlass was at his side.

" Come aft, here," he said to stroke oar; the jolly boat would stand no more weight in the bows than she had already. " And you, too."

Hornblower poised himself on the thwarts, eyeing the grapnel line and the cabin window.

" Bring 'em after me one at a time, Jackson," he said.

Then he braced himself and flung himself at the grapnel line. His feet grazed the water as the line sagged, but using all his clumsy strength his arms carried him upwards. Here was the shattered window at his side; he swung up his feet, kicked out a big remaining piece of the pane, and then shot his feet through and then the rest of himself. He came down on the deck of the cabin with a thud; it was dark in here compared with the blinding sun outside. As he got to his feet he trod on something which gave out a cry of pain—the wounded Spaniard, evidently—and the hand with which he drew his cutlass was sticky with blood, Spanish blood.

Rising, he hit his head a thunderous crash on the deck-beams

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above, for the little cabin was very low, hardly more than five feet, and so severe was the blow that his senses almost left him. But before him was the cabin door and he reeled out through it, cutlass in hand. Over his head he heard a stamping of feet, and shots were fired behind him and above him—a further exchange, he presumed, between the jolly boat and the galley's stern rail. The cabin door opened into a low half-deck, and Hornblower reeled along it out into the sunshine again.

He was on the tiny strip of maindeck at the break of the poop. Before him stretched the narrow gangway between the two sets of rowers; he could look down at these—two seas of bearded faces, mops of hair and lean sunburned bodies, swinging rhythmically back and forward to the beat of the oars.

That was all the impression he could form of them at the moment. At the far end of the gangway at the break of the forecastle stood the overseer with his whip; he was shouting words in rhythmic succession to the slaves—Spanish numbers, perhaps, to give them the time. There were three or four men on the forecastle; below them the half-doors through the forecastle bulkhead were hooked open, through which Hornblower could see the two big guns illuminated by the light through the port holes out of which they were run almost at the water level. The guns' crews were standing by the guns, but numerically they were far fewer than two twenty-four pounders would demand. Hornblower remembered Wales's estimate of no more than thirty for a galley's crew. The men of one gun at least had been called aft to defend the poop against the jolly boat's attack.

A step behind him made him leap with anxiety and he swung round with his cutlass ready to meet Jackson stumbling out of the half deck, cutlass in hand.

"Nigh on cracked my nut," said Jackson.

He was speaking thickly like a drunken man, and his words were chorused by further shots fired from the poop at the level of the top of their heads.

"Oldroyd's comin' next," said Jackson. "Franklin's dead."

On either side of them a companion ladder mounted to the poop deck. It seemed logical, mathematical, that they should each go up one, but Hornblower thought better of it.

"Come along," he said, and headed for the starboard ladder, and, with Oldroyd putting in an appearance at that moment, he yelled to him to follow.

The hand ropes of the ladder were of twisted red and yellow cord—he even could notice that as he rushed up the ladder, pistol in one hand and cutlass in the other. After the first step his eye was above deck level. There were more than a dozen men crowded on

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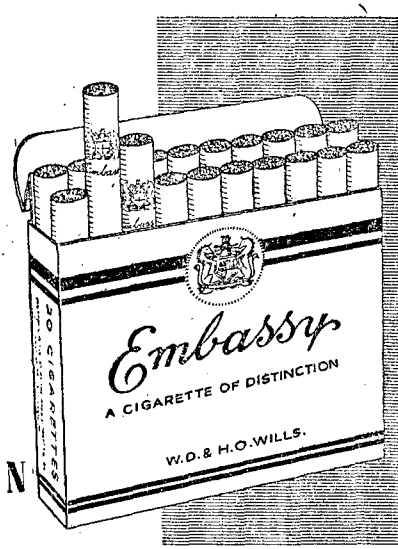

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the tiny poop, but two were lying dead, and one was groaning with his back to the rail, and two stood by the tiller. The others were looking over the rail at the jolly boat.

Hornblower was still insane with fighting madness. He must have leaped up the final two or three steps with a bound like a stag's, and he was screaming like a maniac as he flung himself at the Spaniards. His pistol went off apparently without his willing it, but the face of the man a yard away dissolved into bloody ruin, and Hornblower dropped the weapon and snatched the second, his thumb going to the hammer as he whirled his cutlass down with a crash on the sword which the next Spaniard raised as a feeble guard. He struck and struck and struck with a lunatic's strength. Here was Jackson beside him shouting hoarsely and striking out right and left.

"Kill 'em! Kill 'em!" shouted Jackson.

Hornblower saw Jackson's cutlass flash down on the head of the defenceless man at the tiller. Then out of the tail of his eye he saw another sword threaten him as he battered with his cutlass at the man before him, but his pistol saved him as he fired automatically again. Another pistol went off beside him—Oldroyd's, he supposed—and then the fight on the poop was over.

By what miracle of ineptitude the Spaniards had allowed the attack to take them by surprise Hornblower never could discover. Perhaps they were ignorant of the wounding of the man in the cabin, and had relied on him to defend that route; perhaps it had never occurred to them that three men could be so utterly desperate as to attack a dozen; perhaps they never realised that three men had made the perilous passage of the grapnel line; perhaps—most probably—in the mad excitement of it all they simply lost their heads, for five minutes could hardly have elapsed altogether from the time the jolly boat hooked on until the poop was cleared.

Two or three Spaniards ran down the companion to the main-deck, and forward along the gangway between the rows of slaves. One was caught against the rail and made a gesture of surrender, but Jackson's hand was already at his throat. Jackson was a man of immense physical strength; he bent the Spaniard back over the rail, farther and farther, and then caught him by the thigh with his

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other hand and heaved him over. He fell with a shriek before Hornblower could interpose. The poop deck was covered with writhing men, like the bottom of a boat filled with flapping fish. One man was getting to his knees when Jackson and Oldroyd seized him. They swung him up to toss him over the rail.

"Stop that!" said Hornblower, and quite callously they dropped him again with a crash on the bloody planks.

Jackson and Oldroyd were like drunken men, unsteady on their feet, glazed of eye and stertorous of breath; Hornblower was just coming out of his insane fit. He stepped forward to the break of the poop, wiping the sweat out of his eyes while trying to wipe away the red mist that tinged his vision. Forward by the forecastle were gathered the rest of the Spaniards, a large group of them. As Hornblower came forward one of them fired a musket at him, but the ball went wide. Down below him the rowers were still swinging rhythmically, forward and back, forward and back, the hairy heads and the naked bodies moving in time to the oars; in time to the voice of the overseer, too, for the latter was still standing on the gangway (the rest of the Spaniards were clustered behind him) calling the time—"*Seis, siete, ocho.*"

"Stop!" bellowed Hornblower.

He walked to the starboard side to be in full view of the starboard side rowers. He held up his hand and bellowed again. A hairy face or two was raised, but the oars still swung.

"*Uno, dos, tres,*" said the overseer.

Jackson appeared at Hornblower's elbow, and levelled a pistol to shoot the nearest rower.

"Oh, belay that," said Hornblower testily. He knew he was sick of killings now. "Find my pistols and reload them."

He stood at the top of the companion like a man in a dream—in a nightmare. The galley slaves went on swinging and pulling; his dozen enemies were still clustered at the break of the forecastle thirty yards away; behind him the wounded Spaniards groaned away their lives. Another appeal to the rowers was as much ignored as the preceding ones. Oldroyd must have had the clearest head or have recovered himself quickest.

"I'll haul down his colours, sir, shall I?" he said.

Hornblower woke from his dream. On a staff above the taffrail fluttered the yellow and red.

"Yes, haul 'em down at once," he said.

Now his mind was clear, and now his horizon was no longer bounded by the narrow limits of the galley. He looked about him, over the blue, blue sea. There were the merchant ships; over there lay the *Indefatigable*. Behind him boiled the white wake of the galley—a curved wake. Not until that moment did he realise

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that he was in control of the tiller, and that for the last three minutes the galley had been cutting over the blue sea unsteered.

"Take the tiller, Oldroyd," he ordered.

Was that a galley disappearing into the hazy distance? It must be, and far in its wake was the longboat. And there, on the port bow, was the gig, resting on her oars—Hornblower could see little figures standing waving in bow and stern, and it dawned upon him that this was in acknowledgment of the hauling down of the Spanish colours. Another musket banged off forward, and the rail close at his hip was struck a tremendous blow which sent gilded splinters flying in the sunlight. But he had all his wits about him again, and he ran back over the dying men; at the after end of the poop he was out of sight of the gangway and safe from shot. He could still see the gig on the port bow.

"Starboard your helm, Oldroyd."

The galley turned slowly—her narrow length made her unhandy if the rudder were not assisted by the oars—but soon the bow was about to obscure the gig.

"Midships!"

Amazing that there, leaping in the white water that boiled under the galley's stern, the jolly boat was still afloat with one live man yet aboard.

"Where are the others, Bromley?" yelled Jackson.

Bromley pointed overside. They had been shot from the

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taffrail at the moment that Hornblower and the others were preparing to attack the poop.

"Why in hell don't you come aboard?"

Bromley took hold of his left arm with his right; the limb was clearly useless. There was no reinforcement to be obtained here, and yet full possession must be taken of the galley. Otherwise it was even conceivable that they would be carried off to Algeciras; even if they were masters of the rudder the man who controlled the oars dictated the course of the ship if he willed. There was only one course left to try.

Now that his fighting madness had ebbed away Hornblower was in a sombre mood. He did not care what happened to him; hope and fear had alike deserted him, along with his previous exalted condition. It might be resignation that possessed him now. His mind, still calculating, told him that with only one thing left to do to achieve victory he must attempt it, and the flat, dead condition of his spirits enabled him to carry the attempt through like an automaton, unwavering and emotionless.

He walked forward to the poop rail again; the Spaniards were still clustered at the far end of the gangway, with the overseer still giving the time to the oars. They looked up at him as he stood there. With the utmost care and attention he sheathed his cutlass, which he had held in his hand up to that moment. He noticed the blood on his coat and on his hands as he did so. Slowly he settled the sheathed weapon at his side.

"My pistols, Jackson," he said.

Jackson handed them to him, and with the same callous care he thrust them into his belt. He turned back to Oldroyd, the Spaniards watching every movement fascinated.

"Stay by the tiller, Oldroyd. Jackson, follow me. Do nothing without my orders."

With the sun pouring down on his face he strode down the companion ladder, walked to the gangway, and approached the Spaniards along it. On either side of him the hairy heads and naked bodies of the galley slaves still swung with the oars. He neared the Spaniards; swords and muskets and pistols were handled nervously, but every eye was on his face. Behind him Jackson coughed. Two yards only from the group Hornblower halted and swept them with his glance. Then with a gesture he indicated the whole of the group except the overseer; and then pointed to the forecastle.

"Get for'ard, all of you," he said.

They stood staring at him, although they must have understood the gesture.

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FAIR WIND TO JAVA

by GARLAND ROARK

beginning in next month's ARGOSY,

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" Get for'ard," said Hornblower with a wave of his hand and a tap of his foot on the gangway.

There was only one man who seemed likely to demur actively, and Hornblower had it in mind to snatch a pistol from his belt and shoot him on the spot. But the pistol might misfire, the shot might rouse the Spaniards out of their fascinated dream. He stared the man down.

"'Get for'ard, I say."

They began to move, they began to shamble off. Hornblower watched them go. Now his emotions were returning to him, and his heart was thumping madly in his chest so that it was hard to control himself. Yet he must not be precipitate. He had to wait until the others were well clear before he could address himself to the overseer.

" Stop those men," he said.

He glared into the overseer's eyes while pointing to the oarsmen ; the overseer's lips moved, but he made no sound.

" Stop them," said Hornblower, and this time he put his hand to the butt of his pistol.

That sufficed. The overseer raised his voice in a high-pitched order, and the oars instantly ceased. Strange what sudden stillness possessed the ship with the cessation of the grinding of the oars in the tholes. Now it was easy to hear the bubbling of the water round the galley as her way carried her forward. Hornblower turned back to hail Oldroyd.

" Oldroyd ! Where away's the gig ? "

" Close on the starboard bow, sir ! "

" How close ? "

" Two cable's lengths, sir. She's pulling for us now."

" Steer for her while you've steerage way."

" Aye aye, sir."

How long would it take the gig under oars to cover a quarter of a mile ? Hornblower feared anticlimax, feared a sudden revulsion of feeling among the Spaniards at this late moment. Mere waiting might occasion it, and he must not stand merely idle. He could

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still have the motion of the galley through the water, and he turned to Jackson.

"This ship carries her way well, Jackson, doesn't she?" he said, and he made himself laugh as he spoke, as if everything in the world was a matter of sublime certainty.

"Aye, sir, I suppose she does, sir," said the startled Jackson; he was fidgeting nervously with his pistols.

"And look at the man there," went on Hornblower, pointing to a galley slave. "Did you ever see such a beard before in your life?"

"N—no, sir."

"Speak to me, you fool. Talk naturally."

"I—I dunno what to say, sir."

"You've no sense, damn you, Jackson. See the welt on that fellow's shoulder? He must have caught it from the overseer's whip not so long ago."

"Mebbe you're right, sir."

Hornblower was repressing his impatience and was about to make another speech when he heard a rasping thump alongside and a moment later the gig's crew was pouring over the bulwarks. The relief was inexpressible. Hornblower was about to relax completely when he remembered appearances. He stiffened himself up.

"Glad to see you aboard, sir," he said, as Lieutenant Chadd swung his legs over and dropped to the maindeck at the break of the forecastle.

"Glad to see *you*," said Chadd, looking about him curiously.

"Those men for'ard are prisoners, sir," said Hornblower. "It might be well to secure them. I think that is all that remains to be done."

Now he could not relax; it seemed to him as if he must remain strained and tense for ever. Strained and yet stupid, even when he heard the cheers of the hands in the *Indefatigable* as the galley came alongside her. Stupid and dull, making a stumbling report to Captain Pellew, forcing himself to remember to commend the bravery of Jackson and Oldroyd in the highest terms.

"The Admiral will be pleased," said Pellew, looking at Hornblower keenly.

"I'm glad, sir," Hornblower heard himself say.

"Now that we've lost poor Soames," went on Pellew, "we shall need another watch-keeping officer. I have it in mind to give you an order as acting-lieutenant."

"Thank you, sir," said Hornblower, still stupid.

Soames had been a grey-haired officer of vast experience. He had sailed the seven seas, he had fought in a score of actions. But,

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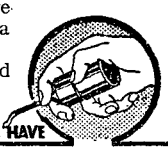

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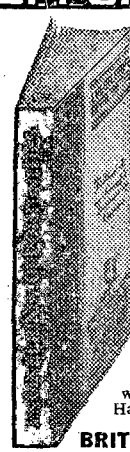

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faced with a new situation, he had not had the quickness of thought to keep his boat from under the ram of the galley.

Soames was dead, and acting-lieutenant Hornblower would take his place. Fighting madness, sheer insanity, had won him this promise of promotion. Hornblower had never realised the black depths of lunacy into which he could sink. Like Soames, like all the rest of the crew of the *Indefatigable*, he had allowed himself to be carried away by his blind hatred for the galleys, and only good fortune had allowed him to live through it. That was something worth remembering.

* * *

ANSWERS to THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT on page 86

1. *Northanger Abbey, in the novel of that name by Jane Austen.*
2. *The deserted house, in "The Listeners" by Walter de la Mare.*
3. *The house at Pooh Corner, in the book of that name by A. A. Milne.*
4. *The shoe, in the traditional nursery rhyme "There was an old woman who lived in a shoe."*
5. *221b Baker Street, where lived Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, in "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.*
6. *The ark, in the Old Testament book of Genesis.*
7. *The farmhouse, in "Cold Comfort Farm" by Stella Gibbons.*
8. *Doubting Castle (owned by Giant Despair), in "The Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan.*
9. *Tara, Scarlett O'Hara's home, in "Gone With The Wind" by Margaret Mitchell.*
10. *The converted barge in which lived the Peggotty family, in "David Copperfield" by Charles Dickens.*

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 1, Davy Jones' locker. 9, Fasts. 10, Sword-knot. 11, Erysipelas. 12, Sale. 14, Egg stage. 16, Throng. 18, Träume. 19, Alfresco. 21, Stag. 22, Alexandria. 25, Extricate. 26, Pined (reversed). 27, The bane of my life.

Down. 1, Different aspect. 2, Vasty. 3, Just in time. 4, Nest eggs. 5, Slogan. 6, Oudh. 7, Kangaroos. 8, Rather good apple. 13, The rent day. 15, Guarantee. 17, Flax leaf. 20, Please. 23, Ranji. 24, Riga.

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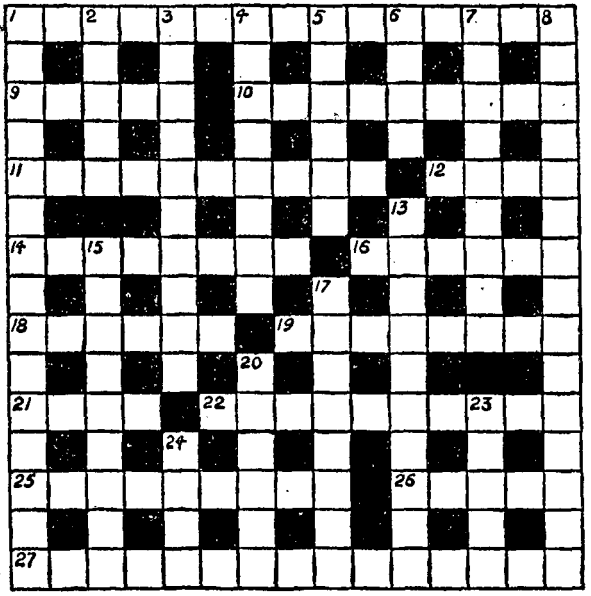
ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 143



CLUES

Across

1 For a change Jack yonder loves what he calls the sea (4, 5, 6).

9 He who "haes meat and canna eat" possibly does (5).

10 Its original purpose was to secure the weapon to the hand (5-4).

11 Ay, sleep, sir, may produce a skin disease (10).

12 May involve a jumble (4).

14 The scampering chick has outgrown this (3, 5).

16 "Thus spake the Seraph; and forthwith Appeared a shining —" (6).

18 The German name of one of Wagner's most famous songs (6).

19 Flo's care adapted to the open air treatment? (8).

21 "The — at eve had drunk his fill. Where danced the moon on Monan's rill" (*Sir Walter Scott*) (4).

22 Raid an axle to reach this city (10).

25 i.e. Extract (9).

26 A tree and a penny went into a decline (reversed) (5).

27 My biggest worry (3, 4, 2, 2, 4).

Down

1 Another way of looking at it (9, 6).

2 "I can call spirits from the — deep" (*Shakespeare*) (5).

3 When the hero is apt to arrive (4, 2, 4).

4 They are put by for incentive (4, 4).

5 An advertiser welcomes a new one if it is short, but it might be just as long (6).

6 Part of India (4).

7 They get on by leaps and bounds (9).

8 Somewhat unenthusiastic appreciation of a Cox's Orange Pippin? (6, 4, 5).

13 Time for a settlement (3, 4, 3).

15 Undertaking that makes Aunt eager (9).

17 May help to make a fine linen sheet one day (4, 4).

20 "Towered cities — us then, And the busy hum of men" (*John Milton*) (6).

23 Pet name for a favourite old cricketer (5).

24 One of its young ladies came across a tiger (4).

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Mendaco relaxes thousands of tiny uscles in bronchial tubes so you can reathe freely and sleep well. 2. Mendaco leviates coughing by removing con-estion. 3. Works through the system and as a stimulating action upon the respira-ory tract. "I am pleased to be able to eport that my wife is keeping perfectly ee from Asthma attacks. Since taking lendaco she has not had a single attack, nd her breathing is so very much better nd practically no coughing either at night r morning." J. E., Romford. "I was ather a bad case, having suffered very uch from asthma and bronchitis. I tarted taking Mendaco after trying nearly verything advertised for Asthma, but I m now quite free from either of these omplaints, in fact people marvel as every-ne thought I was going to die." Mrs. B., erby. "I have been suffering from ronchitis for 12 months and could not get id of it till I read an advertisement of ours for Mendaco which has since proved o be genuine." Mrs. E. C., Wednesbury. et Mendaco, price 2/6, from your chemist oday. This will enable you to see how uickly Mendaco gives relief and benefit o health. If difficult to obtain, write, iving chemist's name and address, to Knox Laboratories Ltd., 29, Duke St., St. James's, London, S.W.1.

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